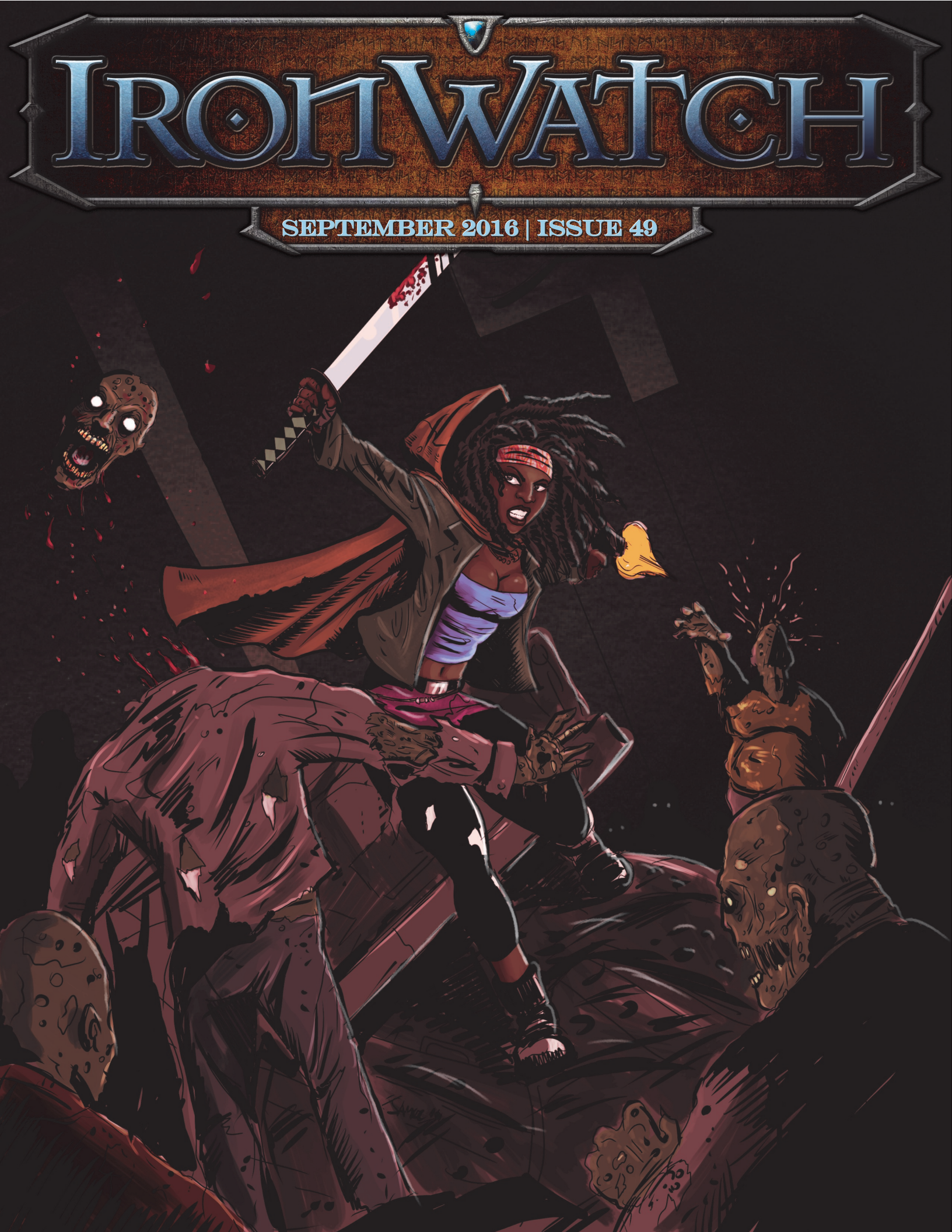
IronWatch

SEPTEMBER 2016 | ISSUE 49



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ABYSSAL TIDINGS

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks again for joining us for another fantastic issue of IRONWATCH magazine!

As the months pass, we continue to get fantastic loads of content from readers like you for articles. Be it stories, tutorials, special rules, or whatever other awesome materials you're working on, we'd love to see it, and are excited for everything that is submitted.

However, just because Kings of War and Mantic's fantasy titles get most of the attention, doesn't mean we want Warpath and Mantic sci-fi articles any less! We strongly encourage anyone who is interested to send us those space-borne articles, whether they be for Warpath, Deadzone, Dreadball, or even just stories not tied to a particular system. The more articles, the merrier!

Finally, for those of you who might be interested, I will be at PAX, helping with the booth for North Star Games. Swing by, and you can try the app for the upcoming adaptation of the award-winning game Evolution!

Thanks for reading, and whether you're a new reader or an old veteran, Welcome to the Watch!

-Austin

Cover art by Boris Samec
Title art by Mark Peasley

Contact us and submit articles at:
ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com

Please note that, while we here at **Ironwatch** *attempt to deliver you the best products and ideas we can, we cannot guarantee the balance of any scenarios or special rules presented herein. If you find any errors, grammar mistakes, or rule imbalances, please contact us on the Mantic Forums (Look for the discussion labeled "Ironwatch Issue X Feedback") and let us know what we could do to improve your fan-produced magazine. If you are interested in writing, illustrating, or editing for our magazine, please let us know on the feedback discussion as well so you can get in on the action!*

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THE IRON FORGE

Welcome back to the Iron Forge.

On display this month for you we have :

- Geoff Burbidge, and a stunning line-up of Teratons for his Dreadball team.
- Marcel Popik and his array of awesome Deadzone Enforcers.

Keep tuned in next month for more fantastic models, and if you have some painted Mantic minis you'd like featured to possibly become an Iron Forge artist, please email high resolution photos of your miniatures to ironwatchmagazine@gmail.com.

Please include your name and/or Mantic forum name. You can also provide descriptions of your paint jobs and titles if you'd like!

Undead Skeletons by Matt Gilbert

GEOFF BURBIDGE

GEOFF BURBIDGE

GEOFF BURBIDGE

MARCEL POPIK

MARCEL POPIK

Undead Zombies by Jim Kew

MANTIC CALENDAR

If you have Mantic-related events or tournaments you'd like to add, please PM Matt Gilbert or Austin Peasley on the forums or **email us** with your event's date, time, location, cost, a brief description, and a URL for more information.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and indicates where Mantic games are being enjoyed, and not necessarily where Mantic will be making an official appearance (Save for the Mantic HQ, of course!).

September

9/10 **(Madrid) Nacional Kings of War**
From 8:00 AM 9/10 to 5:00 PM 9/12
This Kings of War tournament is a "Freak Wars Event"
Rivas-Vaciamadrid, Madrid, España

Forgefather Steel Warrior by Grant Mahoney

October

10/15 **Redstone Rumble**

From 8:00 AM 10/15 to 8:00 PM 10/16

Tickets for the Kings of War events start at $30 for a single day, and $45 for both days.

The event features 2 days of Kings of War, plus 10mm KoW, organized play, and other systems. The main tournament is 5 Rounds with 2,000pts of forces .

Holiday Inn Research Park, 5903 University Drive, Huntsville, AL 35806, USA

10/21 **Refugees of the Olde World**

From 8:00 AM 10/21 to 5:00 PM 10/22

Entry fee is $30, and only 14 slots are available.

This will be a 2000 point Kings of War tournament. Multiple army, generalship, and door prizes will be awarded.

52 East Main Street, Rexburg, ID, USA

Deadzone Veer-myn Piper by Paul Mullis

Warbands battle in the Star-Struck City by Austin Peasley

THE ORDER OF MAURICE

EPISODE 2: FRIENDS OF NECESSITY

By Ben Stoddard

Jephraim heaved as the ship rolled ceaselessly beneath him. He sat in the aft of a small cutter that Morticus had hired to take them out to the Forsaken Isles, watching in misery as the rest of the inhabitants of the craft sat and conversed in the relatively calm weather they were experiencing. Jephraim had always hated sailing and had avoided it whenever possible. His lifestyle had often times required him to flee across oceans, and sometimes the fastest way out of town was to stow away on the river barges that traders would use to haul their shipments, but what he had learned was that there were no tricks, no remedies, that could solve his seasickness, despite what every sailor had tried to teach him.

What made it all so much worse were the heavy mitten gauntlets that had been cuffed over his hands to prevent him from escaping. They had been travelling for a little more than two weeks at this point since Jephraim had unwillingly been forced to join their companionship, and in that time there had been practically no one to talk to. Other than Wilford, that is.

The mohawked man made it a point of telling Jephraim how deadly and dangerous their mission was and how likely it was to get him killed. The only thing that had caused him to relent was Jephraim's bout of seasickness that either caused him to feel

some pity, or repulsed him enough to keep him away, most of the time anyways. Even as this thought entered his head, however, Jephraim watched the raggedy character focus his gaze on him and begin walking over to sit next to him against the soggy hull of the ship.

"Not long noo." He grunted as he slid down onto his haunches. "We be comin' up on Perditus shortly. We'll be goin' straight ta the hart o' tha main island, so you'll be gettin' a baptism by fire."

Jephraim blanched, a difficult thing to accomplish in his present ill-faced pallor. "Why would the captain take us straight into the city as soon as we arrive? I thought for sure we'd have to re-supply or some such endeavor before heading into the ruins!" Jephraim had heard stories of the Star-Struck City and if even half of the stories were true then they were headed into a den of nightmares, with the Captain spurring them into a suicidal sprint towards the darkness.

"The Cap'n did say that we be behind schedule, havin' to catch ye and all has put 'im in a fool mood, ta say tha least." Wilford chuckled and clapped Jephraim on the shoulder. "Dinnae fret yersel' me boy! We'll no let ye die tha fast! Twas too much fuss tryin' ta catch ye! Speakin' o which…"

Wilford reached over and grabbed the mitten gauntlets that constrained Jephraim's hands. Producing a strange looking key he inserted it into the keyhole and twisted. With a sharp click the pressure on Jephraim's wrists released and he breathed a sigh of relief as the shackles fell away and thudded heavily onto the floor of the boat. Cautiously he flexed his fingers and rubbed his hands together in an effort to restore feeling to the numb bits.

Ogres by "Azazel"

Abyssal Hellhounds by "C.M. Minis"

"You aren't scared I'll try to run away again?" he asked without looking at the gap-toothed grin sitting beside him. This produced a full belly laugh from Wilford.

"Ye wait till we gets there an then, if'n ye choose ta flee then we'll see how far ye make it afore somethin' scroffs ye up. Tha Cap'n would be doon right tickled that all tha effort he did take ta get ye here'd be wasted in tha firs' minutes o' us bein' ashore, though."

Jephraim glared at him, but Wilford merely shrugged, and then his face drew a much more stern look to it. "In all trooth, though, if'n ye wanna stay alive, ye'll ha' ta trust us, an ye'll ha to watch oor backs jus' as we'll be watchin' yors. Ya get me?" This caused Jephraim to pause. Wilford had never spoken to him in such a serious tone and it was more than a little upsetting that he did so now. He nodded his understanding.

"Good." Wilford pushed himself to his feet and stretched. When he brought his hands down he reached under the folds of his ragged cloak and produced a weapon that was too long to be called a knife, yet too short to be called a sword. It had a thick blade that ended in a squared tip, giving the whole thing a triangular shape with the sharp side running the long length of the blade. He reversed the weapon and held the handle out to Jephraim, who reached out gingerly to grasp it. It was far heavier than he would have expected, but the heft felt good in his hands.

"Tha' be called a seax; it be like a sword, but it do no require tha finesse tha a sword do. D'ye think ye can use it, if'n ye needs ta?" Wilford raised an eyebrow. Jephraim stared for a long second at the weapon and then nodded absentmindedly. Wilford grunted and stomped back to his spot he had been sitting at the front of the boat.

Jephraim watched him go; his innards had gone cold and he was having a hard time focusing. He looked at the seax in front of him and he shivered at the thought of what things he would be forced to use it on. He felt the bile in the back of his throat and would have retched if he had left anything in his stomach from his last wave of seasickness.

"Land HO!" A voice shouted from up above. Jephraim struggled to stand, and after a few failed attempts managed to raise himself to a level where he could see over the side of the ship. A black dot had appeared on the horizon and the cold dread in his stomach twisted tighter. A choked whisper fell from his lips as he named the dot.

"Perditus"

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The cold water lapped at his inadequate boots that were riddled with holes, but Jephraim was shaking from something that had nothing to do with the ice-cold shallows in which he currently stood. The small ship which had carried them this far lay moored further out in the deeper seawater, presumably safe from the creatures that lay waiting for them in the shadows of the dilapidated buildings that were standing like huddled refugees on the surf torn cliffs before them. Captain Morticus turned towards his men.

Abyssal Dwarf Blacksouls by "Dwarf Giant"

Orc Ax regiment by Guiseppe Aquino

"This will be a short mission, men, just to probe the resistance that we can expect and to test us as a team." He spoke with the calm assurance that helped Jephraim to focus, the jarring cold and the steel in Morticus's voice bringing a remote clarity to his vision. "Stick together, we do not get separated. There are only a few hours before sunset and we want to be back on that boat before then. Understand?"

The Captain looked around at the other four men to whom he was addressing. Berns stood next to the mute flagellant whom Wilford had named Rigo, both of whom nodded. Wilford smiled and responded with a casual "Aye."

Morticus stared at Jephraim until he felt uncomfortable. Finally he opened his mouth to respond when something latched onto his ankle and wrenched him backwards into the freezing water.

Jephraim heard muffled shouts above the water but his thoughts were more preoccupied with the fingers that now clasped his foot. He kicked out with his free leg at a webbed face with huge overlapping scales. The kick was too panicked to cause any real harm, but it caused the creature to hesitate for a moment and in that split second Jephraim pulled his foot out of his trapped boot, leaving the useless bit of leather in the hands of his assailant.

Undead Revenants by Jim Kew

Strong hands grabbed under his arms and pulled him heavily upwards. Jephraim broke out of the water gasping for breath and flailed his arms as he tried to find his feet. There was shouting all around him and lots of splashing, he heard Morticus's voice above the din.

"Get to the beach! We cannot fight them in the water!" he cried. Jephraim looked up to see Rigo and Berns on either side of him, dragging him backwards towards the shore. Looking back he could see the Captain yelling as his blade stabbed downwards into the frigid water again and again. At one point there was a strangled cry that gurgled out of the water and when Morticus's blade pulled free of the water there was a black goo that clung to the steel.

Berns and Rigo dropped Jephraim onto the sand of the beach and turned to take up defensive stances against the lapping tidewaters. Wilford was already standing some few yards back with an axe in each hand. Berns pulled two curved blades out of his belt and took up a stance beside Rigo. Struggling to his feet, Jephraim huddled behind the two warriors and pulled his seax out of his own belt. There was some

splashing and then Captain Morticus appeared out of the shallows.

"Prepare arms! Wilford! As soon as you see any one of those finned monsters you put an axe twixt their eyes! Got it?! You there! Thief! Get out from behind my soldiers and stand your ground! You stand here and watch my back, make sure that none of these beasts surround me! Move!" The Captain rushed forward and grabbed a sodden handful of Jephraim's shirt and pulled him forward towards the lapping tide.

They didn't have to wait long. Soon enough they came staggering out of the shallows. They were human sized, but with great fins extending out from their faces and scales covering their bodies. They shambled as if they did not have a good control of their limbs. Morticus sneered and bellowed challenges at them as they staggered forward.

When they were within a few feet Jephraim heard a whirring noise and suddenly an axe materialized in the skull of the closest creature. It gurgled something as it fell backwards into the water, staining the waves with a black ichor. The rest of the creatures stalked forward, heedless of their fellow's demise.

Jephraim fought to control a rising panic in his throat as the first of the creatures surged forward into range of Morticus's sword arm. With a cry on his lips the captain whipped his blade forward and sliced the top of the closest creature's skull from the rest of its head. The beast fell backwards only to be replaced by two more which pawed at the Captain. Jephraim was frozen to the ground and couldn't move. He watched as Morticus dispatched one of the creatures while the other one raked its claws across his exposed face. The Captain staggered backwards and fell to his knees, all the while raising his

Monster by Jonathan Faulkes

shield to ward off further blows from the beast.

Jephraim could only watch in horror as the fish creature tore at Morticus's shield. Then cold, clammy hands gripped his shoulder and sharp teeth bit into the exposed flesh of his arm. This jarred Jephraim into action. Turning, he stabbed blindly at the creature that had its teeth embedded in his arm. It released its bite and staggered back, but not before Jephraim's seax cut through its left eye. Surprisingly this did not cause it to cry out in pain or even react in any visible way. The beast reached its hands out to claw at him, but the thief simply charged forward with a terrified cry on his lips. He slashed wildly and managed to score a direct hit on the creature's neck, his blade biting deep into the scaled flesh. The beast groaned and fell to the ground.

Turning, Jephraim spotted the Captain as he dispatched the previous creature. Jephraim began to walk towards Morticus but as he did so he felt a heavy weight tackle him from behind. Wriggling under the crushing body on top of him, Jephraim saw the scaly face of another creature as it clawed and bit at him. Crying out, he tried to put his hands up to defend his face and as he did so he saw a flash of metal and then black ichor sprayed out all over Jephraim's face and arms and the creature slid sideways off of his body, with its head rolling some feet away. Morticus stood over him with his hand held out. Grunting, Jephraim took it and pulled himself to his feet.

"Not bad, thief, next time be more mindful, however." The Captain nodded.

"Cap'n! Tha' be tha last o' em, methinks!" Wilford called out from down the shoreline. The Captain nodded and turned to look further out to sea. Jephraim saw his shoulders fall and tried to follow his gaze, when he did the breath leaked out of him and his shoulders sagged even further than that of the Captain.

"Damn…" Morticus muttered. He turned and bellowed to the other three men further down the coast. "Let's move out! We need to find shelter for the night! Let's go!"

Jephraim stared for a few moments longer, then shakily rose to his feet and staggered after the rest of the party. Out in the waters the ship that had brought them this far continued to burn as scaled bodies poured over the sides of the boat. The screams of the ship's crew carried out over the blackened waves. ▪

Goblin Stabby Sneek by Darren Lysenko

Kings of War Siege by "SneakyChris"

ROAD TO THE RUMBLE

Part 3

By David Reid

David again, and I'm here to start getting into the nitty gritty of being setting up a larger event. As always check out our progress at www.Redstone-Rumble.com and if you are anywhere near Huntsville, Alabama go ahead and sign up!

So you're finally here. You've figured out the money, location, & other general requirements of your event and you're ready to Rock and Roll….or Waltz….or what again?

To the point, you should really start thinking of the theme or style of your event. What do you want it to be known for? There are a lot of events out there, what is going to make yours so special? Don't worry if you don't have it hammered out 100% the first year, but you should have a general idea of what you are going for. Will it be more of an 'Ard Boyz style event when anything goes or do you want something more for the "Fluff

Bunny" crowd?

Neither is right or wrong inherently, as long as that is what you are aiming for. Knowing this goes into building a successful event year after year as people will keep coming back.

You can style the event a lot of ways, with barrier of entry, missions, scoring weight of categories, and more if you really start drilling down. Now, if this is your first year, I wouldn't skew in any one direction particularly hard unless you know you've got demand for what you are going for. At this point you just want people to show up so you can have another event in the future. I'll run through what I'm referring to now.

Barrier of Entry

Basically what it sounds like. You are putting up hurdles that players have to get over to enter your event. While this may sound counter-intuitive it does allow you to control the flow on the type of people getting into your event, so it may end up creating a better event for all present by filtering out those you'd rather not have there. Some of the more common of this type would be a fully painted requirement or composition restrictions. Simply, you force players to conform to a desired mode and aesthetic for

Kings of War battle by "WeedyElf"

Kindred Tallspears regiment by Matt Gilbert

their armies, which can create a better event for those present.

Missions

Going this route you use your missions as a way to achieve your goal for the event. This can range from having wacky rules or set ups to setting of a narrative format for the missions. This also allows you to alter overall army composition as you can format the missions to favor a certain style of army. While satisfying, this method does require more work. You are deviating from the normal and you'll need to pay extra attention to ensure the missions work and are balanced.

Scoring Weight of Categories

Assuming you are using the standard categories of Battle, Paint, and Sports you can alter the weight given to a particular event. For example the 'Ard Boyz style is 100% Battles with 0% for Paint and Sports and solely relies on bashing your opponents and nothing else. This might be fine for a one day event, but I've not seen a two day use this format.

Generally Tournament Organizers will shift the weights the other direction, where Painting or Sports carries higher points, and which will draw people who put more effort into the "soft scores" portion. This change

will generally change the atmosphere of an event to reflect what most people think of when they hear of a GT.

As a point of reference, I prefer using a barrier of entry (i.e. comp restrictions) and missions to give the Redstone Rumble the feel I like. It allows me to do the event and list work on the front end and on the day of the event I only have to remember the rulebook and FAQ. Check out our webpage for specifics on my missions and player packet.

Again I hope this article give you another piece of the puzzle in putting together an event like this. As always feel free to check out the Redstone Rumble at www.Redstone-Rumble.com or search for Redstone Rumble on Facebook. We'll have one more article before the Rumble (14-16 October), so if there is anything specific you would like for me to cover or have additional questions, email me at wargamejunkie@gmail.com▪

Elven Forest Shamblers by Andre Kritzinger

BROTHERHOOD OF DARKNESS

By Donn Turner

"All will fail, but a good man knows when to yield…"

-Marco the Elder

The cave was dark and wet, and smelled of old death, but Alexandre did not have a choice. The storm was raging overhead, and showed no signs of abating. Tired, cold, and soaked to the bone, he stumbled into the cave. Once he was deep enough into the cave to get out of the rain, he slowly sank to the ground, and tried to catch his breath.

After a moment, Alexandre realized that something was crawling across the back of his left hand. Looking down, he saw a large hairy spider slowly moving across his skin. Without thinking, he smashed the creature against the wall of the cave with a quick backhanded strike.

"It is not wise to kill a spider…" a voice declared from deeper inside the cave.

In an instant, Alexandre was on his feet in a defensive stance, with a dagger in his hand. "Who goes there?" Alexandre demanded.

"My apologies. I did not mean to alarm you. Please, allow me to light my lantern, and we may have a proper introduction," the strange voice replied.

Alexandre heard steel scraping on flint, and watched a steady flame appear from the

Kingdoms of Men General by "Daedle"

brilliant sparks. He could just make out the form of an older man, dressed in ruined clothing, about ten feet deeper into the cave. He was carefully lighting an old and battered lantern.

"There. That's better. Now, we may be properly introduced," the stranger said. "I am Connor Thatcher, from Miren. Who might you be, Sir Knight?"

"Not interested in conversation," Alexandre said as he put away his knife. He slowly returned to where he had collapsed earlier,

Lord Blaine by Paul Mullis

but did not turn his head away from the older man.

"Very good, Sir," Connor said, formally bowing his head. "I have some provisions, if you would like." The older man reached into a worn sack, and pulled out a bundle wrapped in old cloth. He tossed the bundle to Alexandre.

Alexandre did not catch the ball of cloth, but instead let it land on the cave floor.

"Forgive me my lord, I am not trying to be a bother. I am merely trying to be polite," Connor said.

After a moment, Alexandre relented, and slowly picked up the bundle. After cautiously unwrapping the cloth, he found a small loaf of bread and a bit of cheese. The familiar aroma of the cheese surprised Alexandre. "Where did you get this?" Alexander demanded.

"From a merchant not far from here. I believe that he brings his goods to the Brotherhood fortress to sell," Connor replied. "My apologies. He did not have much of a selection when I chanced upon him."

Alexandre did not reply, but filled his mouth instead. The food was pleasant, but far from the feasts that he was used to. After eating half of the bread, he turned his head, and looked out into the storm. Realizing that the winds and rain had not diminished in the slightest, Alexandre resigned himself to the fact that he was going to have to wait out the storm with his current company.

After some time, Alexandre looked back at the older man. "You have a strange manner of speaking for a thatcher," Alexandre said.

"Yes, my lord. I am not from this land. I have traveled far in my time," Connor replied.

"Miren…that's a small town northwest of here, is it not?" Alexandre questioned.

"Why, yes it is, my lord. I was returning

there after some time away, when the storm overtook me," Connor replied.

Alexandre did not reply, but returned to watching the storm. Connor did not try to continue the conversation, leaving the weary knight alone with his thoughts. The sound of the storm soon filled the cave.

After an hour or so, Alexandre looked back at the old thatcher. He had rested his back against the cave wall, and pulled his tattered old cloak about himself. Alexandre could just see the man's nose peeking out from under his hood.

"Do you have anything to drink old man? I am thirsty," Alexandre stated.

"Why, indeed I do my lord," Connor replied as he slowly started to rustle through his worn pack. After a moment, he produced an old bottle, and brought it to the weary knight.

"I have been saving this for a long time, just for such an occasion. It is a very rare, and very old, vintage. I do not think that you will find its like anywhere in these lands. But, be wary, for it is most potent," Connor proudly stated as he offered the old bottle to Alexandre.

"We shall see," Alexandre replied. After some difficulty with the stopper, Alexandre put the bottle to his lips, and took a long drought. He was not disappointed. The dark liquid had a very complex taste, and was most pleasing. Satisfied with the drink, Alexandre rested a little easier against the cave wall, and took another drink.

"If you will forgive me, my lord, I must say that I think I know of you," Connor stated.

"Oh? Pray tell?" Replied Alexandre before he took another mouthful of the wonderful liquid.

"Well, I am no stranger to the beauty of heraldry…something I have picked up in my travels…and I could not help but notice yours. Are you Sir Alexandre, the Hero of Blood Hill, Champion of Ogre Bluff, and Slayer of the Giant Vangor?" Connor inquired.

Alexandre looked at Connor with a sideward glance before taking another drink for the old bottle. After swallowing a mouthful,

Terrain Obstacle by Rob Phaneuf

Goblin War Trombone by Claudia Zuminich

Alexandre replied, "Yes. I am Alexandre."

"Oh! What an honor, my lord!" Connor exclaimed. "I have heard of your valor. You are quite the topic of conversation in the taverns," Connor stated.

"I am?" Alexandre asked, his speech slightly slurred.

"Why yes! Everyone knows of your bravery and skill. You are a legend, my lord," Connor replied.

"Humph!" Alexandre snorted. "If only my… betters…held your opinion," Alexandre said with a heavy tongue.

"If I am not mistaken, your first victory was won when you were not but an Initiate! It was you that pierced the Goblin King's breast, pinning him to the ground. Their entire army fled as you lifted his head high for all to see!"

"…I was ordered to attack their war engines with the rest of the Initiates…but, the cowardly filth had no discipline, and their lines were a mess…I could see a gap that led straight to their general…so I took it…"

"Yes! You saw your opportunity, and claimed your victory. You won the day almost singlehandedly!"

"…that was a good day…but my commander didn't see it that way…," Alexander slurred.

"How could they not recognize your skill?" Connor replied. "Let me see…next, you slew the Orc Butcher at Blood Hill, am I correct?"

"…yes…that was a little more difficult…but I did it…" Alexander clumsily boasted before taking another drink.

"You were proclaimed the hero of the day as well, and won much acclaim." Connor replied.

"…no…not…not like that…sure, I bested the beast…I put my lance right through his ugly face…but, they didn't think that I was a hero…they said that I was…insub…in…"

"Insubordinate? Why, how could that be? You are a hero! You won the day, yet again," Connor said sympathetically.

"I know what I did!" Alexandre shouted. "But, they don understhan…they are always going on and on about order and discipline…," Alexandre said as he dismissively waived his hand.

"You have been a warrior without peer for years now. I have heard of your adventures, and I cannot fathom why they do not exalt you." Connor stated.

"…be…'cause I am too good for 'em…they can't keep up with me…they are just… jealous…," Alexandre replied with some bitterness.

"Oh, I understand, my lord. How difficult it must have been for you to be surrounded by such dullards," Connor said with compassion.

"Hey….watch it…you are talking 'bout the Brotherhood!" Alexandre shouted.

"Of course, my lord. Please, forgive me. I merely meant that someone of your… genius…should be an example to those beneath you."

"…I tried…I tried so hard…all I wanted was to be an Exemplar…to be a hero…but…"

"They held you back." Connor answered.

"No! No one holds me back! I am without equal!" Alexandre shouted as he staggered to his feet.

"Of course you are, my lord. I can see your frustration now. A true hero should be allowed to lead. To be the example for others to follow," Connor said.

"…an…example…thas what I wanted…to be a hero…I spen so many nights…in the Council Chamber…waiting to be called…"

"Waiting to be called, my lord?" Connor asked.

"…yes…to be called…by…Valandor…to wear a…suit of…armor…" Alexandre muttered.

Kingdoms of Men Army Standard Bearer by "imm0rtal reaper"

Basilean Paladins by "C.M. Minis"

"But, your calling never came, did it my lord?"

"…no…"

"What happened to you, my lord? Why are you here?" Connor inquired.

"…I was in…the Council Chamber…I was tired of waiting…"

"Tired of waiting on Valandor's call?" asked Connor.

"…I was…so…tired…of waiting…of their… disapproval…"

"What did you do, my lord?"

"I was…going to….take…my place…I was… going to…," Alexandre struggled. The bottle fell from his grasp, and crashed on the rough floor. He slowly sank to his knees as tears started rolling down his cheeks.

"You were going to take on a suit of the sacred armor," Connor stated.

"…yes…I was…going to take…what I… deserved…"

"And, why not, my lord? Who, other than you, has earned such a right?" Connor asked.

"…thas right…who else buh me…is…good…enuf…," Alexandre struggled to say.

"They stopped you, didn't they, my lord?" Connor asked.

"…yes…it…was…Marcus…Exemplar…"

"He was worried that you were going to eclipse him. You know that I am right," Connor stated.

"…no…he was…my…commander…he…was…my…"

"I understand, my lord. You aspired to be like him," Connor said with sympathy.

"NO! I was better than him! I was better than all of them!" Alexandre shouted from his knees.

"Yes, you are, my lord. You are better than all of them," Connor replied.

Undead Vampire Lord on Undead Pegasus by Paul Mullis

"…what…what have I done?" Alexandre lamented with a cracked voice.

"You have done the only thing that you could have done, my lord. You have left those who will never be your equal. You have finally begun to fulfil your destiny. It is time for the world to know your name," Connor said with conviction.

"…no…this…this is…not right…who…who are you?" Alexandre said as he looked around in confusion.

"You know that I am right, Alexandre. I have watched you for some time now," Connor said as he approached the broken knight.

"…I…I…I'm not…vain…vainglory…," Alexandre whispered as he slowly collapsed to the cave floor.

"Vainglorious? No, you are not. Vanity is a weakness of lesser men. For ones such as us, there is no vanity. There is only power,"

Undead Zombies by Peter Grose

Connor stated as he knelt beside Alexandre.

"…why…why did…why didn't I listen…," Alexandre sobbed.

"Because, you were made to rule," Connor said as he slowly leaned down over the fallen hero.

"…wha….what are you…talking about?" Alexandre asked in confusion.

"I am not talking about the petty trials of some rabid zealots. The Brotherhood is nothing. I am talking about something much more…eternal. I am talking about taking your rightful place in history, where you belong," Connor said as he started to gently remove Alexandre's chainmail coif.

"…your…hands…so…cold…," Alexandre mumbled as he looked up into Connor's eyes.

"What if I told you that I can show you another…brotherhood? A brotherhood bound by blood, not some pathetic devotion to a lost legend," Connor asked.

"…you…your skin…it's so…pale…," Alexandre stammered.

"Pay attention. I am not some simple tempter sent by the Abyss. What I am offering you is a gift beyond compare. I am offering you eternity. I am offering you a chance to be who you were born to be. Not some pathetic failure, but a god among men," Connor boasted.

"…I…no…I…I…," Alexandre muttered.

"Do not shy away from the desires within you. I know you, Alexandre. I have been waiting for someone like you for longer than you could imagine. You crave the power to show those fools that you were right. You want to prove that you are more than they ever could be."

"…yes…"

"Very well. I am going to give you that power, Alexandre. I am going to give you more power than you can conceive of. But, there will be a price…" Connor stated as he took Alexandre's head into his cold hands.

"…what…price…" Alexandre asked with difficulty.

"Do you know why you were never chosen to wear blessed armor, Alexandre? It's because you have a darkness within you. A cold, dark, hatred. A contempt for all things that are beneath you. But, I find no fault with you. In fact, I want to help you… nourish…your special talents." Connor stated.

Undead Revenant Troop by Guiseppe Aquino

Undead Revenant Cavalry by "imm0rtal reaper"

"…you…still…have…not…" Alexandre almost whispered as his eyes began to close.

"Yes. The price. The price is…servitude, Alexandre. Eternal servitude."

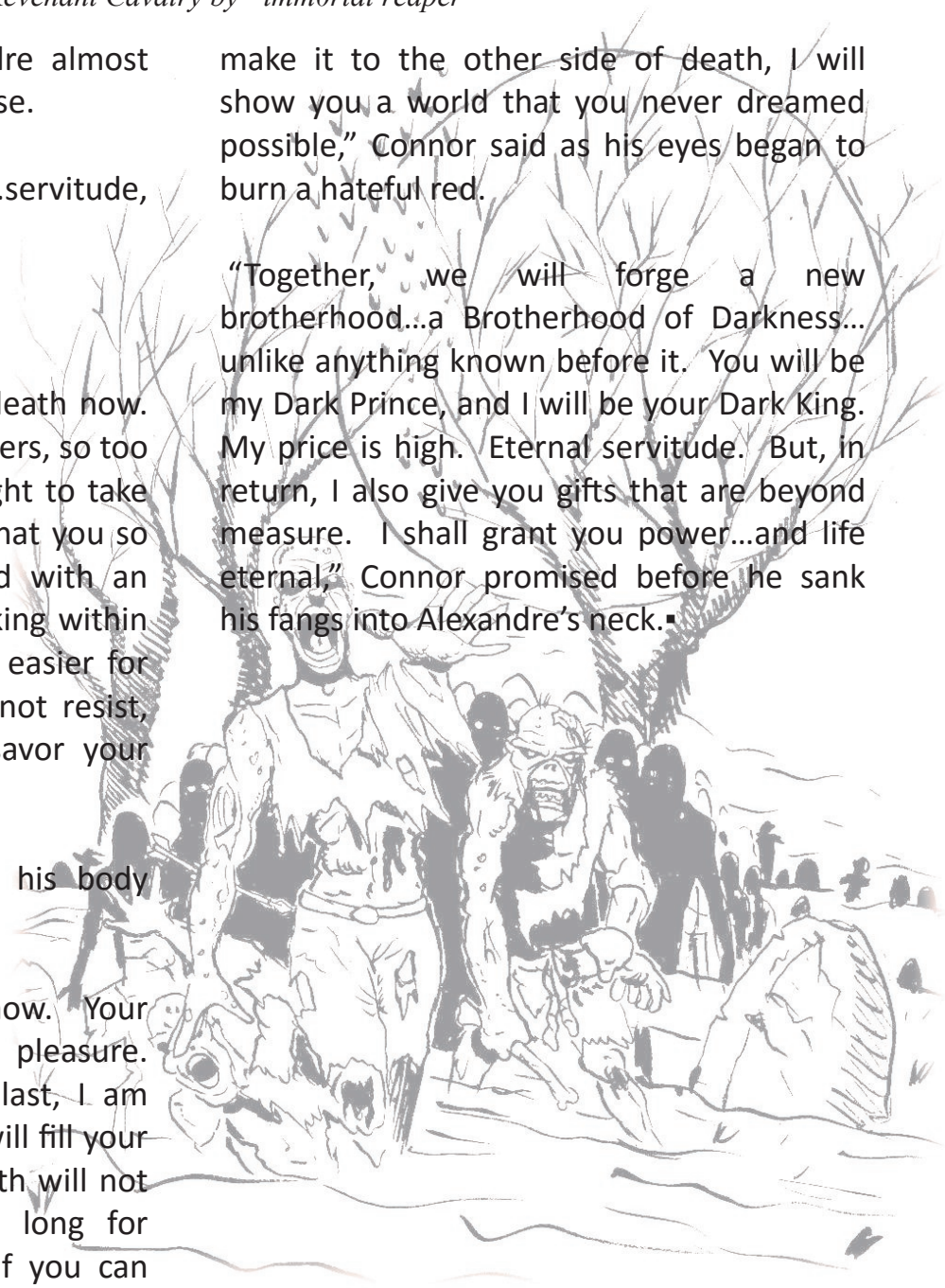
"…no…" Alexandre breathed.

"Yes. Nothing can prevent your death now. Just as you are better than your peers, so too am I better than you. It is my right to take your life for my own. The wine that you so selfishly gulped down was mixed with an ancient poison. It is already working within you. The poison simply makes it easier for me to take your life. If you cannot resist, then I can take my time, and savor your essence."

Alexandre did not respond, and his body became limp.

"I am going to drink from you now. Your blood is going to bring me much pleasure. And, when your heart beats its last, I am going to give you my dark gift. I will fill your mouth with my blood. Your rebirth will not be pleasant. In fact, you will long for oblivion before it is over. But, if you can make it to the other side of death, I will show you a world that you never dreamed possible," Connor said as his eyes began to burn a hateful red.

"Together, we will forge a new brotherhood…a Brotherhood of Darkness… unlike anything known before it. You will be my Dark Prince, and I will be your Dark King. My price is high. Eternal servitude. But, in return, I also give you gifts that are beyond measure. I shall grant you power…and life eternal," Connor promised before he sank his fangs into Alexandre's neck.▪



A Free Dwarf, A Sea Kindred, and A Sylvan Kindred Enter A Bar.

By "Dorf_Pally_Dan"

Proofread and Edited By Mrs. Tyr E.

The Broken Keg Tavern-Culloch Mor.

"I told ya to stand down short-beard," replied the older dwarf to the younger dwarf who was now splayed out on the floor. Whether the young buck was still conscious or not was debatable, but the old timer was too tipsy at the time to care. Still, he could handle his liquor better than most of his age.

Dwarven Warsmith by Peter Grose

Dramatis Personae

- *Unnamed Male "Short-Beard" Dwarf*
- *Unnamed Older Male "Northern" Dwarf*
- *Unnamed Male Dwarven Barkeep*
- *Unnamed Female Sea Kindred Elf*
- *Unnamed Male Sylvan Kindred Elf*
- *Various Unnamed Ironwatch Dwarfs*
- *Various Unnamed Dwarven Mastiffs*

Even for proper dawi standards! But then again, trying to constantly drown one's pain and sorrows in kegs of gotrut for a multitude decades will do that.

He stumbled his way back up to the bar. He then told the barkeep, "Nuvel! Another mug of yer goblin spit."

"Are you going to pay for that?" the barkeep asked, "Yer at the end of yer tab and I don nae run a charity! If ya want that, go to the local manling Cathedrals and almshouses run by the Basillieans or the Brotherhood! They're in the Manling Trade Quarter."

"Ja, ja. I got it," the older dwarf annoyedly replied with a hand waive.

He then dug through a pouch on his belt and brought out a rather ancient statuette; obviously it was of Elven make. The statuette came from back when the pointed-ears were in their prime and were a force to be reckoned with. Much as he used to be. Before the Abyssals, before the Undead, before the rise and fall of Lady Winter, and the Delluvian Catastrophe that came when her Ice Age ended.

The barkeep's eyes widened a bit at the sight of the statue, but he quickly recomposed

Obstacle Terrain by Rob Phaneuf

himself and picked up the statue and examined it. It was a thing of beauty. A Mithril statue of an Elven Royal Guard standing at attention. It was inlaid with Gold and Silver Foil and with Rubies, Sapphires, Eastern Jade, Pearls, and other valuable gems. "I think this will more than cover my debts to you barkeep," the rather thirsty and dry dwarf continued, "And, should also allow me another two-hundred Southern Crowns worth o' drinks besides."

The barkeep started, "Well, I dunno abou-"

The rather surly drunk growled at him and started to give him the Evil Eye. The Barkeep then stammered, "V-Very well then; you may consider your debts paid and you now have two hundred Crowns worth of drinks left to buy on your tab."

"Glad to make you see reason," the drunkard replied as he calmed down and went to nursing his new stein of over-glorified paint remover.

It was then that two ear-blades walked up behind the dwarf. One sat to his left and the other sat to his right. The dwarf, even in his drunken stupor, could sense he had company. Past experience as a cutthroat, hired thug, soldier of fortune, and bar brawler kicked in. He knew that many a shortbeard would probably try to immediately swing at one of them, and hope the element of surprise would kick in.

Still, he knew the odds were against him if they were hostile, even with the weedy members of the elven race. No, he would let things play out for the time being and see where things went.

"That was a nice statue," the elf to his left replied in the lilting accent of the Sea Kindred. She was a rather fair lass. Her borderline pinkish-white hair seemed to have been an unconventional cross between a red-head or strawberry blonde and a platinum blonde. She kept her rather long locks tied up in a ponytail which trailed down her backside into the lowered hood of a robe which she was wearing.

Since the hood was down, he could see her face clearly. She had eyes of emerald and some red freckles upon the bridge of her nose and cheeks. If they had plans to be malicious, you would think they would keep their faces better hid. But, then again, it could be part of the ruse. The dwarf then briefly tugged on his braided gold and silver-

streaked beard while looking to his right. It was another robbed elf. This time a male. He also had his hood down, which showed a head full of spiked hair, dipped snow white in lime. The spiky hair was shaped to point straight up. If it had been done a bit more evenly and neatly it could've passed for a proper flattop instead.

He heard some of the Sylvan Kindred of The Galahir Forest would do this as a form of self -decoration along with a more traditional greenish and/or blue woad. It was times like this the dwarven axe-for-hire hoped the rumors that this tavern in the elven slums doubled as front business for a shanghaiing ring for the Sea Kindred Fleets was false. While he didn't mind working for the "Fair" Folk, he would rather get paid for it!

The somewhat tipsy dwarf took another sip of his Ogre Swill and replied, "Ja. I took it from an Ogre I kneecapped who was fighting for our fallen cousins. Let's just say he didn' nae live long enough to earn his pay. Ja?"

He then emptied his mug and motioned for the raven-bearded dwarven barkeep to get him another round. "Beautiful? Isn't it? Rest assured, unlike other dwarfs, I can admit to seeing a fine elven piece of art when I see it," he chuckled while taking a quick glance and a wink over at the fine lass of the elfin duo.

She blushed ever so slightly for a brief moment and nervously fidgeted with her ponytail for a bit, but then quickly cleared her throat and recomposed herself. He then took another sip and continued, "It's probably best I got rid of it today. It reminded me of better days, for both of our peoples."

"Better for both of our peoples? How so? Is nae your Empire on the rise once again," the

Kindred Gladestalkers by "WeedyElf"

Elven Palace Guard by Jonathan Faulkes

spiky-haired elf inquired.

At that the dwarf chuckled bitterly yet again. "Hah! 'Mein' Empire! Das ist rich!" He then hocked up some phlegm and spat it on the cobblestone floor and continued his rant, "I'll have ya know mein Herr und Damen that despite being a dwarf I am not with th' Golloch Empire or the accursed Abyssal Ones. May the great fires of the Rift roast the fallen ones for eternity! No, in case you couldn't tell from my accent and dialect, both of which are influenced by the Varangur Expatriates of The Mammoth Plains, I am from the former "Free Lands" of the Northern Dwarves! Now Fiefdoms of der 'Great und Mighty' Golloch Empire in everything but name! Once 'free dwarves' forced to take knee due to the death of a foolish Thane, being pressed on both sides, and a shortage of manpower and resources!"

It was around this time that the female Sea Kindred subtly passed the barkeep a bag of coins and the barkeep, in turn, hurriedly pinched a few grains of powder from a bag kept under his counter into the other dwarf's tankard while he was distracted by his own enraged, drunken tirade.

"Well, a toast to the fallen I say," the dwarf exclaimed in a mixture of both deep bitter resentment and mourning, "and to the days that we shall never see again. Ach, fortunate are the fallen dead, who don' nae have to suffer the present." The dwarf then raised his Pewter Tankard and took a big swig.

"And to what is yet to come," the Elven Maid replied in turn, "For someday winter will end and spring will come once more. For truly I say to you that I think that both of our peoples can be great again."

"Nuvel, what are you talking about you infernal sword-ear-," the dwarf started to say before he fell over into a deep slumber.

"Another conscript for the fleets," the Bartender chuckled questioningly as he emptied the drink into a basin behind the

counter and started to wipe the stein down with a slightly-soiled rag.

"Not quite," the female Elf answered as she brought her hood over her head, and proceeded to help her compatriot pick up their newly-acquired prize and quasi-stand and quasi drag him between their shoulders. "As usual, a pleasure doing business with you," the bartender chuckled some more as he went back to cleaning out his collection of steins.

"Likewise," the elven lass replied with a slight and knowing smile. A smile that indicated that this was far from the first time they have engaged in very, very similar business arrangements.

"You remember the plan," the female elf replied to her male partner-in-crime. "Of course I do, you infernal squid," he barked back, "We act drunk, stumble a bit, sing some slurred tunes, and if any shorty guards question us about what we're doing, we tell them this sack of dead weight is a fellow mercenary and we're taking him back to the Cliff's Edge Inn to sleep his hangover off. All though, I could spice it up a bit and say that you and he were planning to…"

"You're a barrel of laughs, you know that you infernal land-lubber," she snapped back as they proceeded to drag/carry the rather short and yet rather heavy dwarf in plate back to the hideout. They could've disarmed him, even sold his weaponry for a pretty profit, but time was short and they needed to get a move on. Not to mention their Majordomo was insistent that their noble employer demanded that he and all of his wargear and personal items were to be brought back in one piece. That made the job even harder, as traversing the rust-

Dwarven Brock Riders by Jose Manuel Chasco Gonzalez

Dwarven Throwing Mastiff by "Dusty"

inducing and diseased sewers were now out of the question.

Bureaucrats who knew nothing of how the outside world worked were such a pain at times. It seems the higher-ups amongst the Nobles of Elvenholme had special plans for him. They knew bits and pieces of what they had in mind (and more than a few rumors). But, it was not their place to question. They were to only follow orders. No more and no less. They were cutthroats, scouts, and spies. They dug up info (often via a bit of torture and bribery), assassinated political and military targets, performed the occasional bit of sabotage, and once in a while a bit of kidnapping and defector extraction. Such as the kidnapping they were doing right now.

They snuck from alley to alley and from street corner to street corner the best they could under the circumstances. While they paid off the local gangs and toughs protection money earlier on to leave them be during this operation, there were no guarantees that they would fulfill their promise. They just hoped that the local thugs would be smart enough not to kill the proverbial golden goose for a few more coppers. And they also hoped the backup sleeper cells in the area would be able to rescue them from either the Mafiosos or the Law in case they got caught.

It was then that they saw someone approach them. However, it wasn't one of the local bands of rowdies and rogues. No, it was members of the local Ironguard with accompanying mastiffs. They were doing the best they could to keep law and order in a very hostile and run down part of the Thane's Hold. Indeed, due to the danger of patrolling this borderline warzone, they were given the authority to act as judge, jury, and executioner when travelling in formerly "no-go" neighborhoods by the High Thane himself. Not to mention they were allowed to have some rather nasty mastiffs accompany them. Something the crossbow and firearm equipped troops usually didn't have.

As they approached, the blonde elf put on her best and most charming smile and greeted, "Why, hello there gentlemen! How are you this fine evening?"

"Cut the formalities lass," replied the lead Ironguard Patrol Dwarf, "What are you doing with that dwarf yer carrying there?" As he started his gruff inquiry, the nearby mastiffs growled hostilely. ▪

Kingdoms of Men Wizard by Andre Kritzinger

QUESTONOMICS

By Dennis Browning-Saunders.

There are many tales of great mages…Calisor Fenulian; who created great works of art and magic, and almost managed to nearly destroy the sum total of civilisation on Mantica. Valandor the Great; a man who would not be known as 'the Great' without having performed deeds that were at least grand or higher.

Just once, Bannon the Mage, with his self-equipped title, wondered if those same giants of power had merely used people's stupidity against them. It was a depressing train of thought.

He sighed, and dumped out the sack-load of bones unceremoniously on the floor. He looked over the contents, and sighed again.

"What," he asked, picking up a small shape, "is this? Cat?"

His assistant for the evenings work, a young farmhand named Tom and useful only to help carry things, squinted at the skull. "Er… yeah, I think so. We just kind of…gathered… everything you asked for. Is that okay?"

Bannon turned the former pet head and looked into the empty eye sockets. "I guess it will have to do. I hope you managed to gather at least one or two actual people? Heroes aren't going to want to come and save a village that's under the curse of Mittens the Undying."

Tom patted a sack beside him, but carefully, as if the contents were much more important than the other bodily remains. "My Aunt Gabby. I don't think she'll require much magic to raise. She was pretty much an unholy terror while she was alive."

Bannon raised his eyebrows. "Gabby, huh? The name needs some work, but the story writes itself. An evil witch in life, consorting with Abyssals and foul spirits of a perverted nature, raised from the dead by her own unending evil…yeah, your little village will be pulling in all sorts of heroes, ready to crush skulls and, more importantly, spend their gold."

"So…this is what you do? Go around villages turning caves into lairs for monsters?" Tom asked, placing Gabby's remains down with a great deal more care than the robed mage.

"Yeah, pretty much. It's called 'questonomics'. Heroes have gold, and when they hear you have monsters to kill, they come here, spend a little of that gold on your smithy, the inn, what have you, and then move on. My job is to set up the cave, or church, or ancient ruin of another age, whatever you happen to have in the local area."

"You need Aunt Gabby for that? Couldn't you just…raise an Abyssal?"

"Ha! You lot aren't rich enough to afford an Abyssal. How am I going to make a living giving away free Abyssals to every dirt poor village that asks? No; you get undead. Don't have to feed 'em, see? Even goblins need to be fed, and they're a pain for not sticking in the lair. You get a binding spell that resurrects the dead every full moon, if they haven't been too crushed, mangled or blessed. If they are, you just throw some more skeletons in here. Or bodies, if you have dead adventurers. Really it looks after itself. Here, pass me that book. The one with the human face on it."

Dungeon Saga Danor the Mage by "C.M. Minis"

Tom picked up the book while making every attempt not to look at it. “But don’t the heroes know? I mean, won’t they figure out that the undead keep rising near our village?”

Bannon sat down on a barrel holding a skeleton. It was an old trick; the heroes opened the barrel expecting treasure, for whatever reason, and got a knife in the eye. Good fun. Why they always expected treasure was beyond him; to the best of the mage’s knowledge, treasure was not often kept in mouldy barrels. He looked up from a page of writhing lettering.

“Look, kid, you seem like a nice destitute villager, so I’ll let you in on a little secret; heroes are morons. If they weren’t, they wouldn’t have gone into heroing. They have no idea about what goes into setting these quests up, and they don’t care. I’ll toddle off to the next town, sit in the inn with my cowl drawn up to hide my face in shadows, and before you know it you’ll be knee deep in swordswomen named Sonja and men who can barely fit through the doorway because of the muscles and armor. And your mayor will have given me a few gold pieces, but not too many or I would have summoned you an Abyssal, and I’ll be on to the next potato-based economy or Baron that wants a picturesque banshee in his hold.”

“Moss.”

“What? What do you mean, moss?”

“We don’t grow potatoes. We’re moss farmers.”

There was a moments silence, as Bannon seemed to consider this. He had closed the arcane book, which trembled in his hands.

“Doesn’t moss just occur naturally?”

“Don’t potatoes?” Tom asked back.

Abyssal Dwarf Lesser Obsidian Golems by George Adsett-Knutsen

Undead Skeleton regiment by Guiseppe Aquino

"Alright, fair point. You learn something new everyday."

"It's medicinal." Tom said, on the defence.

"Oh yeah, I can see why that would be important. Look…I wouldn't normally do this, but I might manage one Abyssal. A small one, mind. I think you guys are going to need all the help you can get."

"I didn't realise that's how it worked. I thought people just went out and had adventure." Tom said, sitting down, rather neglectfully, on a bag that contained former neighbours.

"Look at it like this…how old are you?"

"Sixteen, why?"

"Right, and a lot of lads and lasses your age toddle off out of the village to have those adventures. But, the thing is, there is only so much adventure to go around! I'm nearly sixty, and the only adventures I've seen are ones I created for other people. Sure, there might be some trapped Abyssal in a mine somewhere, tormenting the locals, but how often do you think that happens naturally?"

He didn't bother to wait for a reply before continuing. "Not often, is the answer. And those adventuring heroes, they have gold they need to spend, armor they need repaired, tithes to give for the pious ones, of course. And that money could do your village some good, right? And then, in a

couple of months when the money is flowing well, maybe your mayor will give me a yell, and I'll come over with a few more pets. Got a friend who makes traps too. A dwarf, good…er, man. He'll give you a deal on some of the usual. Spiked pits. Big axes that fall out of the ceiling, that kind of thing."

"Could you get a dragon?"

"A drag…can I get…are you out of your mind!" He waved at the ceiling, fully two feet above their heads. "How am I going to get it in here? What will it eat? Dragons are for abandoned dwarf holds, lad, not moss farms. You'd be hard pressed to get a troll in here, and even then he'd be kneeling!"

"Right, sorry."

"Well, you weren't to know." Bannon said, but Tom heard him muttering under his breath. The word 'dragon' seemed to appear several times.

"Right. I think we are ready to raise the dead, including Aunt Gabby the witch…just watch yourself, they can be a bit difficult to manage until I can get the control spells in place."

"Aunt Gabby was no witch. Well, not really. Even though that's what some people called her."

"It's just the story, lad. Your average hero likes a good legend to go with his questing. The Kitten Eating Witch of Moss Farm will draw more attention than Aunt Gabby, Nuisance. Now, watch yourself."

Bannon raised one arm straight above his head, the other held the book close to his face, as he began to recite the ancient and terrible words. At least, Tom assumed they were ancient and terrible; he didn't understand them. But the bones one the floor, separated into piles, started to rattle and move, like the macabre jigsaw puzzle. The torchlight twisted and contorted as a foul smelling breeze passed through the caves, and Bannon's voice rose to a shout, before cutting to silence. The breeze died. The light steadied.

Undead Revenant by "imm0rtal reaper"

Undead army by Jim Kew

There were thirty skeletons now, and more scattered through the caves, Tom knew, placed there earlier by the two men. He felt a chill run through him as the dead stood to attention, waiting, watching without eyes.

"Well, that went well." Bannon said cheerfully, clapping his hands together. "I'd have liked to see more rusty weapons, but frankly your smith isn't very good at making even worthless weapons. Look, Aunt Gabby only has a bread knife. Still, beggars can't be choosers."

"What about the Abyssal, do you summon that now?"

The cheerful expression fled Bannon's face. "Yeah, about that. The thing is, your mayor already paid extra for the Abyssal. But summoning? It is not the same as necromancy."

"I don't understand?" Tom said, with a sinking feeling that he actually understood all too well.

"Requires a bit more than old bones, is what I am getting at. You were, um, volunteered…"

Tom realised that he was surrounded by dead friends and relatives, and possibly pets, armed with a collection of embarrassing but sharp utensils. He sensed a presence from behind him, and turned into the empty gaze of Aunt Gabby.

"Sorry, kid." Bannon said, as the bread knife jabbed forward. "Some of us just aren't born to be the heroes."▪

Kingdoms of Men Knight by Andre Kritzinger

THE INQUISITION

Part 1

By Donn Turner and Alex Younger

"Evil lurks in the shadows, because it abhors the light of truth"

-Hegemon Bolisean

A Secret Origin

Bolisean was more than just a great warrior. He was more than just the first Hegemon. His faith and blood consecrated the bond between the Shining Ones and humanity, forging a path through destiny for the pure and just. His reign as the first Hegemon laid the foundations for Basilea to become the heart and soul of the world.

At least, this is what is preached to the masses in the City of the Golden Horn. Most of the stories about Bolisean are even true. He was a great warrior. He had indomitable

faith. His blood and oath did seal the pact between man and god. However, there is so much more to the story.

Bolisean was also an idealist. A true crusader. He honestly believed in his purpose, and thought that his faith would see him through if his sword arm should fail. This is why Bolisean was so utterly devastated when he realized that he had been betrayed. On the field of battle, surrounded by vile orc savages, a broken Bolisean sank to his knees as the machinations of a dastardly plot played out in his mind. Several of his peers had sworn to send their men to fight alongside him. They pledged oaths of service and friendship. However, when he needed them most, they had all withdrawn, and left Bolisean and his men alone on the field. They had been betrayed by their own brothers.

Bolisean had been so trusting. So gullible. He had condemned himself, as well as all of his men, to a sorry fate. All because he did not want to see the darkness within the hearts of men.

In desperation, Bolisean called out to the Shining Ones. He was in awe as his prayers for salvation were answered. A whole host of magnificent warriors descended onto the field of battle, and laid waste to the hordes of orc butchers. The day had been won, and a new era for humanity had begun.

Dungeon Saga Valandor by "C.M. Minis"

Undead Zombie horde by George Adsett-Knutsen

Bolisean immediately returned to his fortress after the battle, and dispatched Paladins to bring his treacherous former allies to justice. He was not surprised to find that they had all fled, well aware of the price of their scheming. Enraged, Bolisean vowed that the traitors would be hunted until the end of time.

It was then that a lowly priest approached Bolisean. Humbly weathering Bolisean's rage, the priest simply said that there was another way to bring the oath breakers to justice. He had been blessed with a vision from the Shining Ones the night before the battle, and only now had been permitted an audience with Bolisean. The priest asked for the room to be cleared of everyone, except for Bolisean's most trusted lieutenants, as the message was only for the great warrior.

Still consumed with anger, Bolisean glared at the priest. After a long moment, Bolisean's rage began to calm. The simple priest just stood before the warrior, his head bowed as if in prayer. Bolisean then ordered the room to be cleared, except for two Paladins that had always been at his side.

Once the others had gone, Bolisean ordered the priest to speak. The priest then began to describe his vision. The priest had seen Bolisean standing triumphant on the field of battle. The sunlight flared off of his pristine armor, and a halo of stars radiated about his head. As the priest knelt down in awe of the magnificent warrior, he noticed that a storm had begun to appear on the horizon. The storm grew and grew in intensity until the majesty of the sun was slowly replaced with a cold darkness.

The warrior, once proud and untouchable, began to tarnish and rot within seconds. It was then that the priest noticed that the darkness had coalesced into a vile mass at the warrior's feet. It sent inky black tentacles of darkness snaking up into the warrior's armor, slowly worming their way into every seam and joint. In despair, the priest cried out to the Shining Ones for salvation. At first, the priest feared that his cries had gone unnoticed, as no aid appeared. Then, almost imperceptibly, a faint glow began to emerge from the dark soil. Tiny pinpricks of dim light floated out of the faint glow, and started to drift towards the stricken warrior. As each little ball of light touched the darkness assaulting the warrior, the shadow tendrils would retreat as if stung.

This was not always the case, however. More often than not, a small sphere of hope would touch the darkness, only to be consumed as the shadows surged all around it. As the priest watched on in fascination, he realized that slowly, but surely, the darkness was being pushed back one seam and one joint at a time. The noble warrior began to recover from the horrible assault, and the sky began to lighten.

By the time the darkness had been forced almost to the ground, the sun broke through the dark clouds, and the warrior became himself again, radiant and majestic. However, the priest noticed that the darkness was never banished completely. The little balls of light were constantly fighting a terrible battle against the darkness. This contest would never end, but if the battle was ever abandoned, then darkness would consume all.

Bolisean sat in silence for a long time after the priest finished his story. He closed his eyes, and prayed for understanding, but this was mostly a gesture. Bolisean knew what the vision meant. He knew full well what was being asked of him. He also knew what would have to happen if light was ever going to have a chance against the darkness.

It was with a heavy, but resolute, heart when Bolisean broke his silence. Bolisean made

Undead Ghoul troop by Guiseppe Aquino

Kingdoms of Men Knight s by "imm0rtal reaper"

each of his personal guard, and the priest, swear an oath of secrecy to the Shining Ones. No one was to speak of this meeting, or the vision, ever again. To break this oath would be a fate worse than death.

Next, Bolisean commanded that a secret order of only the most gifted and dedicated individuals be assembled. Their purpose would be both sacred and self-sacrificing, as they would have to forever remain in the shadows in order to effectively seek out corruption and heresy across the land. They would be given everything that they would need for their sacred mission, but forever be denied the glory and honor awarded to those who live a life dedicated in the service of others. A most serious cause for those few that could shoulder the burden.

Finally, Bolisean told the priest that he would have to leave the church, as his new life would take him far from the light of faith. Before the priest could respond, Bolisean named him as the first Master of the Order of the Inquisition. Instead of serving the Shining Ones through the church, the man would have to walk a knife's edge between light and darkness. Bolisean explained that he could never do what the Inquisition would need to do in order to fight the darkness, but others could wage this clandestine war in his name. Bolisean's two Paladin bodyguards would serve as guardians of the new Bishop, and help train and recruit suitable candidates for their holy mission.

Thus, out of treachery and despair, the Secret Order of the Inquisition was born.

The Secret Order of the Inquisition

The Secret Order of the Inquisition has been shrouded in secrecy since its inception. In fact, only the current Hegemon and Master of the Order know the full history of the order. This is not just by choice, but out of necessity, for to attract attention is to invite death…or worse.

The very first Master of the Order understood this, and set out with secrecy in mind when he left the City of the Golden Horn just after receiving his charge. The Master, along with the two bodyguards pledged to him, headed north, and soon disappeared into the wilds of the world. Their undisclosed destination was one known only to the first Master, who spent his childhood in the mountainous terrain south of the Mountain of Kolosu. When he was a boy, he had stumbled onto a massive subterranean complex that had been carved out of the rock by an ancient river. He would explore the complex as a child, and considered it to be his own private world away from the toil of the day. It would work as a perfect place to start their secret war.

Over the years, the Hole, as the underground keep has become known, has truly become a hidden fortress. Scores of servants have hammered away at the rock, and made once natural features into smooth and polished rooms and chambers. Each room has a specific purpose, with many filled with ancient books, scrolls, and histories. Other rooms have a more direct purpose, as confessions must sometimes be obtained through physical encouragement.

Undead Necromancer by "left64"

Undead Wraiths by Martin Geibner

The Hole is also a formidable fortress in its own right as well. The same servants that have repurposed the natural caverns into more fitting accommodations are also the defenders of their underground lair. Concealed murder holes, traps, and other defenses cover the entire complex. In fact, it is unwise for even chosen recruits to wander without an escort, as they might come to a messy end without guidance.

There is only one main entrance into the Hole, and this passage has been carefully camouflaged to hide within the surrounding rock. Observation points and lookouts also surround the landscape, so that anyone approaching the Hole will be spotted well before they are close enough to cause any trouble. If an army were to attack the Hole, they would find themselves befuddled by numerous fake tunnels, false entrances, and passageways large enough for only one person to pass at a time. This makes the Hole very easy to defend. A natural underground stream, combined with vast provisions, also ensures that the Hole is well protected from a siege.

If there is ever a supernatural threat to the Hole, more esoteric defenses can also be called upon. Basilea is home to some of the best schools of magic in the human realms, and has provided many gifted mages to the ranks of the Inquisition. They have spent years carving sigils of protection into the stone structure, which has made the fortress almost immune to arcane forces. This not only protects the occupants of the Hole, but also prevents any unwanted scrying from observing the fortress. If one were to try to use arcane means to locate the Hole, they would find only harsh mountainside and sparse vegetation.

Even with all of these defenses, the Hole is much more than just a secret bastion. It is here that all of the most dangerous and heretical artifacts are brought in order to be studied or destroyed. For an Inquisitor to brave such a journey, let alone risk the artifact falling into the wrong hands, is a testament to the power and danger of such artifacts. This task is never taken lightly.

Masters, Inquisitors, and Apprentices

The Hole would be worthless if it were not for the men and women that fill its halls. From the beginning of the Inquisition, only the very best in humanity have ever been considered to be worthy for such a sacred mission. The first Master of the Order spent weeks praying and fasting, struggling to think of ways that he could be sure of a candidate's purity and stability. Only after

Elven Lord on Dragon by Paul Mullis

Undead Revenant Cavalry by Peter Grose

the Shining Ones had gifted him with many complex, yet subtle, tests did the first Master begin to recruit his shadow army.

To be recruited into the Inquisition is not a simple thing. Prospective candidates for induction into the order are carefully screened for any flaw. Indeed, a candidate for recruitment will have undergone numerous tests of purity and ability long before they are even aware that they are being evaluated. The last test of the candidate, is to see if they can deduce what has been happening to them during these trials and tests. Only then, if the candidate has put the puzzle pieces together, will they be approached for possible induction into the order.

Once a candidate has been selected, the Inquisitor will send word to the Master of the Order that they have taken on an Apprentice. From this point on, the Inquisitor will begin to introduce the Apprentice into the Inquisition's mysteries. Never all at once, and never without continued testing. It takes a lot of time to determine if a candidate is worthy of the knowledge that they will gain through their partnership and training.

As the Inquisitor prosecutes their sacred mission, the Apprentice will learn from their master. In time, the Apprentice will see sights that others may only ever dream of. They will also have to learn to overcome the terror caused by witnessing what evil can unleash upon the world, as well as to endure the misery that so often follows in its wake. If an Apprentice ever fails in their loyalty or duty, or tries to leave the order, they will be hunted without mercy until they have been killed. Upon their death, the Apprentice's spirit will then be entrapped by a sacred ritual. This is to ensure that a necromancer can never interrogate an Apprentice's spirit after death, lest they learn about the Inquisition.

After a sufficient amount of time and experience, and if they survive their adventures, the Inquisitor will decide when their Apprentice has finished their training. It is at this time that the Inquisitor and Apprentice will return to the Hole, so that the Apprentice can be presented to the Master of the Order. The Apprentice will undergo a final test of faith. If they succeed, they will be promoted to the rank of Inquisitor. Those Apprentices that fail are never spoken of again.

Once an individual has been elevated to the position of Inquisitor, they are free to leave the Hole, and start their own war against the darkness. Their path is never directed by their superiors, as each Inquisitor must have the freedom to find their own way. This is because each Inquisitor is unique, with their own skills and experience. They would not be nearly as effective if they were required to fit within a specific situation.

Over the years, an Inquisitor will see many things, and travel far and wide as they conduct their silent war. It is not unknown for Inquisitors to even enter the realms of the elves and dwarves, as there are no boundaries set out in their pledge of service. As long as there is evil to vanquish, an Inquisitor will go anywhere, and endure anything, in order to bring light into the darkness. Sometimes, it is a long and lonely road. Sometimes, an Inquisitor can share the burden with trusted followers. There have even been occasions where more than one Inquisitor has been chasing the same

Terrain by Rob Phaneuf

evil. These chance encounters with peers are rare, but welcome, as it gives the Inquisitors a chance to lighten their burden.

After many years of struggle against the darkness, some Inquisitors begin to feel a desire for a change in their lives, for even the most dedicated crusaders can grow weary over time. For some of the older Inquisitors, a yearning to leave a legacy becomes a driving goal. For others, the desire to impart knowledge or wisdom becomes all important. Some Inquisitors simply want to advance in their order, and will do what they must to attain greater status.

Kings of War Siege by "SneakyChris"

For these reasons, and many more, when an Inquisitor desires to make a change in their lives, they must first find and accept an Apprentice. Not only will this ensure that a potential successor has been found to replace the Inquisitor, but the process of finding and training an Inquisitor is vital to the Order's survival. Many Inquisitors take to finding an Apprentice with zeal, as it warms their hearts to share their experience with someone else. Other Inquisitors see their duty as a burden, and make for harsh taskmasters.

Whatever the motivation, once an Inquisitor has trained an Apprentice well enough for them to become an Inquisitor themselves, they will receive special recognition within the Order. To start with, the Inquisitor will be elevated to the position of Master Inquisitor. This is no mere title, however, as many new responsibilities and positions of authority will now be open to the newly promoted Master.

Many Master Inquisitors are allowed to create a special area of operations, called a Tribunal. Within the boundaries of a Tribunal, which ranges in size from entire territories to a single town, the Master Inquisitor is the supreme authority. No other Inquisitor may conduct their investigations unless they have specific permission from the Master Inquisitor presiding over the Tribunal.

This practice originally started so that newly promoted Inquisitors would not disrupt the workings of another Inquisitor, who might have spent decades putting together an investigation. But, in practice, it also enables older Master Inquisitors, who are too old or infirm to continue working in the field, to continue to contribute to the Order.

Another position that Master Inquisitors can be appointed to is that of the Watcher. Because Inquisitors have so much power and authority, as well as practically limitless resources, there is a chance that the darkness can corrupt even the purest of heart. Therefore, the Order would be foolish not to have an office where Master Inquisitors can examine the actions of their fellow Inquisitors.

The position of Watcher is not one that is sought out by many, and Master Inquisitors that become Watchers quickly discover that their peers and associates begin to keep their distance. Some Master Inquisitors

Kings of War Siege by "TSNC"

Kings of War battle by "WeedyElf"

relish the chance to become a Watcher, and take to the position with passion. These zealots are almost feared by the Inquisitors who serve under them, and rightly so. It takes a special kind of person to hunt their former friends.

There are also numerous positions within the Hole that can be filled by Master Inquisitors. After many years of service, Inquisitors can collect a great deal of experience and understanding about many subjects. It is not uncommon for older Master Inquisitors to become experts in rare fields, and serve the Order well as sources of information. Older Master Inquisitors can also devote the rest of their lives to research and study, which is vital to the continued success of the Order.

Obviously, only a Master Inquisitor may ever be elected to become Master of the Order.

Followers and Assets

The life of an Inquisitor is not one of privilege or ease, but a lifetime spent in the shadows, forever hunting the dark things that hide there. They do not have to do this alone, however. Many Inquisitors will attract followers during their travels. These strong individuals will have useful skills or abilities

that can aid the Inquisitor in their endeavors. They can also provide the Inquisitor with a ready source of protection and muscle, as more often than not, the monsters and heretics that an Inquisitor pursues do not go quietly back into the night.

However, an army of knights is not always needed to destroy every heretic. Most of the time, an Inquisitor will need to use secrecy and subterfuge in order to discover heresy. It is in these particular situations, where the followers of an Inquisitor may be more valuable than gold. For this reason, many Inquisitors will develop networks of contacts and informants. Some of an Inquisitor's informants may not even be aware that they are acting in such a capacity. If an Inquisitor is any good at their job, then their identity will never be revealed, as even a hint of suspicion could cause their prey to go into hiding.

Also, because there are no restrictions as to who can become an Inquisitor within the Order, an Inquisitor may be male or female. This has obvious advantages and disadvantages, as there may be certain places where a lady is permitted to go, but a lord is not. It is in these common situations where an Inquisitor must rely on one of their followers, or a temporary asset, if they cannot go where they need to. A clever Inquisitor will set plans in motion where an asset is working for them without even being aware that they have been manipulated. Although such practices are not consistent with church teachings, they are sometimes necessary, for the good of all.

Because secrecy is so important for an Inquisitor, it is rare for any of their followers to know the true motives of their purpose. Most often, Inquisitors will set up elaborate ruses and deceptions in order to hide their identities, even from those that could be considered friends. It is not uncommon for "bandit kings" and "pirate queens" to travel abroad, only to vanish once an evil has been vanquished. Left with no explanation as to where their leader went, the confused followers will simply disperse, each going their own way.

In some instances, a follower will work for an Inquisitor for an extended period of time. There are many examples of followers aiding an Inquisitor for years on end. It is these

Goblin Wiz by Darren Lysenko

Undead Revenants by Matt Gilbert

rare few individuals that an Inquisitor truly cherishes, for the road is long, and real company is always welcome. Some Inquisitors will actively recruit the best followers that they can find, and keep those that perform well with them until there is no other choice. A gifted follower may even be good enough to become an Inquisitor in their own right.

Followers are also important to some Inquisitors, because the Order forbids an Inquisitor from having a spouse or family. This not only prevents unnecessary complications, but also removes potential sources of manipulation or coercion. Especially trusted followers can fill this void in an Inquisitor's life, and it is not uncommon for an Inquisitor to become very fond of their most trusted followers. In fact, a few Inquisitors even fall in love with one of their most loyal followers, but this is strictly forbidden by the Order. Such emotional entanglements distract an Inquisitor from their mission at best, and could lead to outright disaster in the worst of circumstances.

Tools of the Trade

While trusted and skilled followers and assets can be the key to a successful mission, they are not the only tools that an Inquisitor has at their disposal. When an Apprentice is elevated to the rank of an Inquisitor, they are given their Sigil, which is the single most important piece of equipment that they will ever receive. An Inquisitor's Sigil can vary in form, but will always be made from a piece of metal, and will have the Hegemon of

Basilea's seal engraved upon it.

The metal used in the creation of a Sigil is a very guarded secret within the Order, and many a Master Inquisitor has wasted years trying to solve the mystery. It can be of silver, gold, or even bronze in color, but it is nothing like these precious metals. The Sigil, for all intents and purposes, is indestructible. It can be left in a raging fire, and remain cool to the touch. It can be hit with the mightiest of hammers, and will never deform in shape.

The metal is truly wondrous, and many Inquisitors have told tales of how their Sigils have deflected blows that would have surely killed them.

The Sigil is more than just a mystery, however. It is also an incredible tool. When an Inquisitor is forced to reveal their Sigil, it commands immediate respect and authority within the borders of Basilea, for all know the Hegemon's seal. With their Sigil, an Inquisitor can also requisition anything that they need in order to complete their mission, from troops to sailing vessels. If they encounter any resistance, the Inquisitor can call upon the full authority of the Hegemon of Basilea. Only fools fail to realize the seriousness of the situation, and the significance of the Sigil. These poor individuals do not live long after making such a mistake.

Despite the power and advantages it can bring, revealing a Sigil is not something that is done lightly. While more zealous Inquisitors tend to reveal their Sigils at the slightest provocation, the truth of the Order is still kept a secret. As far as anyone knows, there is no such thing as the Inquisition, only rare individuals that are on a special mission for the Hegemon. Such things are watched very closely as well. Inquisitors that are only too eager to reveal their Sigils will soon find

Star-Struck City ambush by Austin Peasley

Demon by Andre Kritzinger

themselves having a conversation with a Watcher. If the Inquisitor doesn't learn their lesson, they may not be an Inquisitor for very long. After all, if everyone expected the Inquisition, it would not be able to perform its duties.

Because secrecy is so vital for the Order's success, Inquisitors have access to hidden resources that would rival many smaller kingdoms. Weapons, clothes, horses, coaches, and gold are just some examples of the resources that an Inquisitor can obtain. These resources are hidden in special caches across the land, and can often be obtained from one of the many assets that an Inquisitor will develop in their travels. In desperate times, an Inquisitor can even appear before the Master Inquisitor of a Tribunal, and request aid. Such requests are not always fulfilled as desired, but it is a rare instance indeed for one Inquisitor to refuse another.

Some of the venerable Watchers have used the riches and resources available to them to set up elaborate spy networks. These networks are truly amazing, and can even penetrate into the elven and dwarven realms. Nothing happens without someone noticing, and multiple layers of informants and patsies only serve to confound any inquiries.

These webs are not just used to trap heretics and fools, but also wayward Inquisitors. The Watchers are always watching, and they are always testing, for it is their duty to stop an Inquisitor before they fall, and destroy everything. If an Inquisitor ever became suspicious, they would find it almost impossible to penetrate the extensive web of lies and subterfuge. Such is the way of the Watcher.

All Good Things…

The one thing that all Inquisitors have in common, from the lowliest Apprentice to the Master of the Order, is that they will one day die. Death comes for all, and even the most ardent devotee to the church cannot escape this truth. However, for Inquisitors, there are special concerns.

This is because most Inquisitors do not meet death in a bed, surrounded by loved ones. That is a luxury which simply doesn't exist for the Inquisition. Instead, most Inquisitors find death at the end of a heretic's blade, or in the jaws of some horrific beast.

If there were no such things as demons or necromancy, then an Inquisitor could rest easy in the grave. Few have earned their peace more than an Inquisitor. However, demons are very real. They feed off of the anguish and pain of the human soul. Necromancy is also very real, and even death is no escape for the weary.

It is because of these concerns, that special rituals must be performed for the spirit of a fallen Inquisitor, so that they will not be forced to reveal their secrets in death. These are solemn rites, and no priest would engage in them without the greatest of care and respect. When an Inquisitor takes their first oaths, part of the ritual binds their spirit to their Sigil. In doing so, the Inquisitor

Basilean Panther Riders by "C.M. Minis"

voluntarily forfeits the afterlife, and pledges to remain locked within a timeless nothingness until their soul can be freed.

Such is the devotion of the Inquisition, that they willingly give up eternity in order to serve humanity. No one can truly comprehend the magnitude of such a sacrifice, except for the Inquisitors themselves. It is for this reason that no effort to recover a lost Sigil is ever considered too great, even if it takes a thousand years. Every Sigil will be recovered, and returned home. Each member of the Order, regardless of their personal quirks or level of zeal, considers the recovery of a Sigil to be their most sacred duty.

Dungeon Saga Tyrant of Halpi by George Adsett-Knutsen

Once a Sigil has been recovered, it is secured in a special box, which will hide and protect its precious cargo. A delegation will then be dispatched to a take the box to a secret temple, located in the shadow of the Mountain of Kolosu. Only here, in this unique temple dedicated to the dead, will the box be opened.

Mortuary Priests, individually chosen for their purity and faith, will then begin a sacred rite that will separate the lost Inquisitor's soul from their Sigil. The spirit is then offered up to the Shining Ones. What becomes of these spirits after the rite is performed remains unknown, but the Inquisitors have faith that they will finally find the peace that they were denied in the world of the living. Such is their burden.

Of the Fallen

It is rare, but not unknown, for an Inquisitor to fall from grace. One can only spend so much time in the darkness before they start to shun the light. The Inquisition spends a

great deal of time watching and testing the members of their order, but it is not overly difficult to disappear when one knows how.

Because of the danger that such arch heretics pose to the Order, a special group of Master Inquisitors was appointed for just such heresies. They are called the Hunters, and only the most capable can join their ranks.

This is because, of all of the heretics that the Inquisition must face, a fallen Inquisitor is by far the most dangerous. If the Hunter recover a corrupted Sigil, it remains in a special vault, at the bottom of the Hole, for all eternity. There is no rest for the wicked…

How to Use the Inquisition in Your Games

One of the best things about using the Inquisition for your games, is that they can fit into almost any game or army. I have included some ideas below, as well as some scenarios, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Let your imaginations soar!

Undead Werewolf by Guiseppe Aquino

Dungeon Saga

Inquisitors and their followers are perfectly suited for any Dungeon Saga game. In fact, it is this type of adventure that Inquisitors would engage in the most. Someone has to see what's at the bottom of the dungeon!

- Inquisitor – use any human hero type, but make sure that they have a little extra experience before they start out. Inquisitors are supposed to be amongst the most talented and gifted people in the world, so they would naturally be better than a starting character. If you want to use a Legendary Hero in your adventures, then just name your character as a Master Inquisitor!
- Followers – Any hero type can be used here. They can even have more experience than your Inquisitor, as it is possible for a particularly gifted individual to cross paths with an Inquisitor during their travels.
- Assets – Any non-human character could easily be an asset. They are with the Inquisitor for a brief time, but will have to return to their own people after the adventure is over. They could even show up again, as a good asset may be hard to find, and they already have a relationship with the Inquisitor.

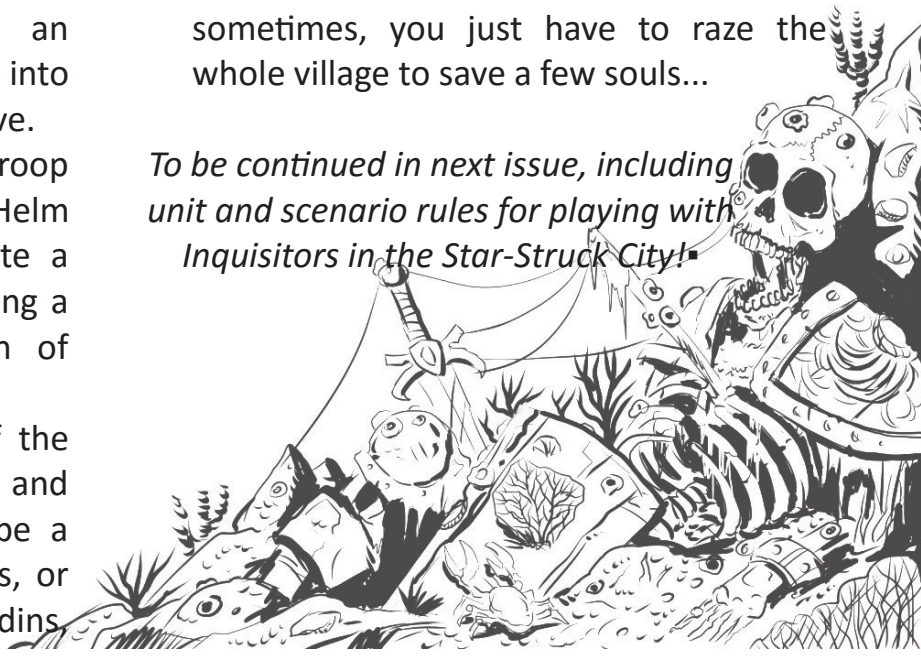
Kings of War

It will be a little more difficult to put an Inquisitor, and their followers, into a full Kings of War army, but it is not impossible with a little imagination. Here are some helpful ideas:

Undead army by "imm0rtal reaper"

- Introduce a single Troop or Regiment into your army, and give them a magic item to help set them apart from other standard units. For example, Swain's Villein Rangers would be a perfect Troop choice to represent an Inquisitor and their followers. They have Elite, Piercing, Stealthy, and Vanguard. All of these abilities would perfectly simulate an Inquisitor and their followers getting into a position before reinforcements arrive.
- Another choice would be to take a Troop or Regiment of Men-at-Arms with a Helm of Confidence. This would simulate a group of hardened followers, following a zealous Inquisitor, into the mouth of madness!
- Create an entire army based off of the Basilean Force List, being led by and Inquisitor Hero! The Hero could be a Dictator, Priest, High Paladin, Abbess, or War-wizard. Penitent Mobs, Paladins, and the Sisterhood would be ideal units to follow a zealous Inquisitor against the forces of darkness! Remember, some Inquisitors do not shy away from burning down whole towns, and are constantly surrounded by the frenzied faithful. The Watchers keep these firebrands under control, most of the time. But, sometimes, you just have to raze the whole village to save a few souls...

To be continued in next issue, including unit and scenario rules for playing with Inquisitors in the Star-Struck City!▪



QUEENSLAND NORTHERN KNIGHTS PRESENTS

KINGS OF WAR APOCALYPSE

By Ken—"dunsforddownunder"

On Sunday 7th August 2016, the small KoW Community here in South East Queensland, Australia, came together, to try and meet the crazy aspirations of an eternally optimistic, yet delusional, Yorkshireman. Not only did they give up their time for a KoW Tournament on the Saturday, they gave up two days in order to fulfil a deranged vision. I was humbled, and my heartfelt thanks go out to this remarkable little community for putting up with my silly ideas.

THE AIM

I've been playing Kings of War for just over 18 months now, and have been impressed with the mechanics of the game, the balance, the speed, etc, etc. I was fairly sure that it would scale up relatively well to any size game; I'm not convinced it works at 1000pts or less, but hey, it's a battle game, not fisticuffs in a back alley simulator!

Certainly, the community around these parts have players with vast collections of figures sitting loved but all too often un-fielded. To fix this, I wanted a mechanism to use all those glorious miniatures, and provide a break from the normal Tournament Series,; we've run 16 so far, 13 of them League scoring.
Also, in the spirit of friendly rivalry, I thought we could continue with the Australians

setting the standards. At the beginning of 2016, Australia ran the largest KoW Tournament at that point in time: 46 players, with full kudos to Cancon and the TO. Yes, this has since been surpassed by the United States, and now France at 120 players if I recall correctly. Kudos to the French. Australia will be back to try and beat that record!

I saw the big KoW battle run at Salute in the UK, and from what we could find out, we think that was around 65,000pts, so that gave us a target as we/I wanted to run the

largest KoW battle to date, silly aspirations and all that.

So, in typical fashion, the English produce a superb game, and the Colonies, along with the rest of the World, proceed to trounce them at it! Aussie! Aussie! Aussie! (I can say that, being a Yorkshireman and just over here to keep the Aussies in line).

THE RULES

- The aim was for 100,000pts in total, Good vs Evil
- All miniatures were to be painted
- The table was 48 feet long, by 4ft wide (we had thought about 6ft wide, but concerns over leaning over so many wonderful miniatures)
- Alignment restrictions adhered too: Good only with Neutral, and Evil only with Neutral Armies
- Unit Unlocks were adhered too
- No percentage restrictions on Allies for armies built
- No Magic Artefacts allowed
- Flyers would lose Fly when disordered
- Each side had a 30-minute time cap per Turn, to move, shoot, melee. Any actions not done were missed. If it was a combat, just move attackers back 1" and assume I was rolling the dice, i.e. no damage done.
- Turn 7 was optional
- There were 4x "Dominate" Areas worth 2000 VP's each, and generals just had to have a majority in the zone
- There were 8x "Pillage Objectives" worth 1500 VP's if controlled
- There were 8x "Loot Tokens" worth 1000 VP's if held, Double VP's if carried into Oppositions half of the table

THE ARMIES

THE FORCES OF GOOD – 50,500 points total

- Forces of Basilea – 2,000pts
- Order of the Brotherhood – 8,500pts
- Dwarves – 14,000pts
- Elves – 9,000pts
- The Herd – 2,000pts
- Ogres – 5,000pts
- The League of Rhordia – 8,000pts
- Salamanders – 2,000pts

THE FORCES OF EVIL – 52,400 points total

- Orcs – 2,000pts
- Goblins – 2,400pts
- Nightstalkers – 6,000pts
- Forces of the Abyss – 6,000pts
- Forces of Nature – 1,700pts
- Undead – 21,500pts
- Empire of the Dust – 7,500pts
- Varangur – 5,300pts

THE BATTLE

Each side had 5 Generals, although Evil had me flitting in helping out as a 6th until I was banned from helping by the Evil's Left Flank commander; he got a bit perturbed at my atrocious dice rolling, and my attempt to give my opposing general an offer to double 1 roll a unit he just flank charged with a Dragon. Apparently it was a beastly unit at De6+, stupidly high Ne, and some other gubbins … so I returned to taking poor quality photos and posting battle updates after the ban.

For first turn, we did a "dutch auction" I believe it's called, where the opposing generals kept throwing money in a pot to choose first turn. Evil came out most generous (weirdly enough) and chose to go first. The pot of $55 went to the Watoto Charity.

TURN SUMMARIES

- Evil Turn 1 – 20 minutes taken, the Army moved forward en-masse, 2 Good units routed.
- Good Turn 1 – 23 minutes taken, the Army braced itself centre and right flank, left flank headed out, 6 Evil units routed.
- Evil Turn 2 – 28 minutes taken, the advance units started hitting, 20 Good units routed.
- Good Turn 2 – 30 minutes taken, more hails of shooting, counter charges, 29 Evil units routed (Only one combat resolution missed).
- Evil Turn 3 – 30 minutes taken, the grind begins in earnest, regiments lining up to have a bash, 23 Good units routed (Only two combat resolutions missed).
- Good Turn 3 - 30 minutes taken, piling reinforcements into the battered front line holding evil at bay, 29 Evil units routed (Only one combat resolution missed).
- Evil Turn 4 - 30 minutes taken, break throughs on the right of centre, regiments and monsters piling through the gaps, 21 Good units routed (Only two combat resolutions missed).
- Good Turn 4 - 28 minutes taken, a little precise shooting, melees galore, the left flank had more or less devastated what they faced, 22 Evil units routed.
- Evil Turn 5 – 26 minutes taken, stepping up the carnage, objectives in mind for a last dash, 34 Good units routed.
- Good Turn 5 – 25 minutes taken, pushed the Evil units away from scoring objectives, holding the line on the right and centre, their left mopping up and heading for the centre, 23 Evil Units routed.
- Evil Turn 6 – 26 minutes taken the last big dash for objectives, piled into dominate

areas, flew at pillage counters, hammered Good units holding Loot, 27 Good units routed.

- Good Turn 6 - 27 minutes taken, took back loot counters, piled into dominate areas, and denied pillage objectives, 19 Evil Units routed.
- Turn 7 – after a full weekend of KoW, we were all shattered and had a stack of packing up to do, we voted to call it.

NOTABLE MOMENTS

The miniatures arrayed were totally spectacular, with a guestimate of 7,500+ painted miniatures and a range of manufacturers. Some miniatures were 30+ years old, and we had 18-ish Brock Rider regiments, 10-ish tanks, 25-ish Regiments of Knights, 21 Vampire Lords, 17 Dragons, 5 Abyssal Fiends with Well of Souls support; the list goes on, and it was a phenomenal spectacle.

First Double 1 of the battle was when Good shot the living proverbial out of an Undead dragon, including fire from 4 bolt throwers, 2 hordes, and a regiment. Despite the untold damage, the Double 1 appeared to much celebrating.

Evil amassed something like 15,000pts on their left flank, and only 3,500pts of dwarves faced them, with 2,000ish pts of elves guarding their flank. Simple plan, crush the left, wheel, and pile into the centre. The Dwarves had a different idea, and stood resolute throughout the game,

the Dust massed, something like 4 regiments deep, 20+ regiments wide, with more Vampires than you care to count, mummies, 22 units of wraiths; the list goes on. They faced a mass of knights, Basileans, ogres, foot knights, and shooting. This just turned into a slogging match, with wave after wave after wave of charges but neither side gaining ground. It was bogged down, and the expected support from the Evil left never arrived; damn dwarves!

with one Horde lasting 4 turns on horrendous damage thanks to double 1's galore. Regiments of dwarves were piling in to hold the line where other hordes and regiments fell, guns of every size were shooting over the line, and at one point, a dwarf king dashed (impressive for a stunty) into a gap in the line, and held out against a combined Abyssal Fiend / Mounted Sons Charge.

The Elves guarding the Dwarves left were annihilated however, just not soon enough. Their lines broke, and cavalry, monsters, and infantry poured through. Some were mopping up the elves, some trying to get to the centre to help, and others charging into the flanks of the dwarf contingent who again stuck two fingers up, and carried on. But the breakthrough against the elves really came too late.

On the Evil right flank, it was left to goblins, orcs, and Nightstalkers to hold off more dwarves than you've ever seen, working with their friendly allies the League of Rhordia. 12 regiments of brocks were here, along with 10-ish tanks, hordes and regiments of warriors, and they all hit like a hammer. How the evil right flank held for 4 turns was beyond me; they were slaughtered, and the

In the centre, the Undead and Empire of

armies of Good mopped up and headed for the centre. Thankfully, being dwarves, they were too slow.

Oh, and on turn 4, we actually noticed there was an unpainted unit of Brocks on the Goods right flank. They were only undercoated black, and despite desperate pleas from two of the Good generals claiming the dwarves had just come from their shift down the coal pit and hadn't had time to shower, the unit was removed from play. It still didn't help evil's cause, as those damned dwarves just refused to break

THE RESULT

After walking the battlefield, and seeing who had which Dominate Areas, Loot Counters with their Location, and who had uncontested Pillage objectives, the result was:

GOOD ARMY – 16,000 VPs
EVIL ARMY – 6,500 VPs

A well deserved victory to Good, as they took a battering but held on and countered admirably.

SUMMARY

OK, I'm hoping some of the other folk who were there on the day will post their recollections, and pics in forums for you to enjoy as well, as my photography skills are as bad as my playing skills.

I will say this, despite last minute jitters that it just wouldn't work, it was one of the most fun days wargaming that I've ever had. The KoW community here stepped up to the plate, brought out a truck load of miniatures all painted, had organised their armies, got them on the table, played a hugely entertaining game, and finishing it, packed everything away, and headed for their beds.

The table full of miniatures and Terrain looked spectacular; I can't remember in 40 years of wargaming seeing many wargames of that scale. Yes, there's some stunning larger displays out there, but not where it's been a game. It was phenomenal. I'm hoping some of the folk post their own pictures to do the event justice. It certainly caused a stir at the venue, as there were other tournaments going on, displays, and walk throughs. Everyone stopped to come and look at the splendour of the mass battle. Interestingly enough, there were Infinity, 9th Age, and Bolt Action Tournaments running alongside: we started after, and finished before, all of them. It's a real testament to the game, the rules, etc., that a game that size works, and can be done in a day.

Anyhow, I hope it was of interest and brought a smile to some, until next year. Oh, and yeah, there you go World: Australia has shown the way yet again with another largest thing!

Keep those dice rolling folks!▪

Deadzone Enforcer Peacekeeper by "C.M. Minis"

DEADZONE
THE CLEANSING

PART FIVE

By Matthew Lindsay

Enforcer Vessel "Gorgon's Fury"
Location: Gamma Tau, Low Orbit.
Briefing Room, 06:00 hours Earth equivalent
14 days since First Recon's failed extraction / 1 hour until planetfall.

'Enforcers of the Council.' Celeste's voice cascaded across the crowd and it immediately fell silent, the hubbub of the twenty Enforcers dying down in an instant as all turned rapt with attention to the Interrogator.

Dramatis Personae

- Rylor Ings, Enforcer 8th First Recon Response
- Annika Sanne, 'The Fourth', Enforcer 8th First Recon Response
- Caelum Augustus, Enforcer Captain of the Gorgon's Fury
- Celeste Allenova, Enforcer Interrogator of the Gorgon's Fury
- Carthor and Voya, Enforcer Sergeants of the Gorgon's Fury
- Roza and Kallon, Enforcers of the Gorgon's Fury

Rylor was surprised to see her on the small stage of the room, for only moments before they had been walking together from the armory. He was even more surprised to realise it was apparently Celeste who was to give the briefing, and not the Captain. Instead, Augustus was stood to the side of the raised floor, his bulk in the shadows a familiar sight to Rylor these past two weeks.

Rylor had only to look about him in the midst of the armored congregation to see the loyalty the Interrogator, the Captain, and the Council had inspired. All the Enforcers stood solemnly, waiting for Celeste to begin. There was a large vid-screen behind her depicting the Capital, Gamma Prime.

The situation was near identical to the time Rylor had first entered the room; the crowd of Enforcers, the respectful silence, Augustus standing above. Now, however, Celeste stood above them too.

'Here is what we know: The Plague is present on this world and the responsible Artefact has gone missing. Our target is the human responsible for the disappearance, Annika Sanne. She was an Enforcer,' and with that revelation some of the crowd began to murmur.

'Furthermore she was a member of the First Recon squad that touched down on Gamma Prime. The three surviving Enforcers secured the Artefact, whose location Annika herself had discovered, before she shot her squad in the back and took the Artefact herself,' and with that there was a positive uproar. None could believe it.

Deadzone Enforcers by Jamie O'Toole

Deadzone Plague vs Corporation by Liam Markey

The shuttle footage of Rylor's almost-execution played behind Celeste as she stepped aside, giving all present a crystalline view of the most painful experience of Rylor's life. He saw the Third go down as Annika unloaded a bullet in the back of his skull. He saw himself turn, before being shot once, twice, and falling. He saw her take the Artefact and leave the shuttle. The footage ended there. It did not show Rylor's survival.

The crowd all about him was asking questions, conversing harshly, calling to the Interrogator for answers – it was wrong, unthinkable, downright evil that an Enforcer would turn on one of their own – It went against everything the Enforcers were! – Didn't Annika know what they fought for? – What it meant to be an Enforcer of Humanity and the Council?

And yet there was her betrayal, clear for all to see.

When Celeste had spoken her name a portrait of Annika had filled the vid-screen alongside the footage. Annika's larger-than-life eyes gazed across the Enforcers she had deceived. Rylor knew that face better than any; and though none present knew it, Rylor knew she was looking directly at him. Whereas once those larger-than-life eyes had held admiration and maybe even love when she had gazed at him, seeing them now, they held only a coldness of which Rylor was unsure if he could ever match.

Celeste lowered her hands in a gesture of quiet, and again, the crowd fell silent.

'Annika Sanne leaves the Recon shuttle with the Artefact and is immediately secured by a second unknown shuttle. The second shuttle

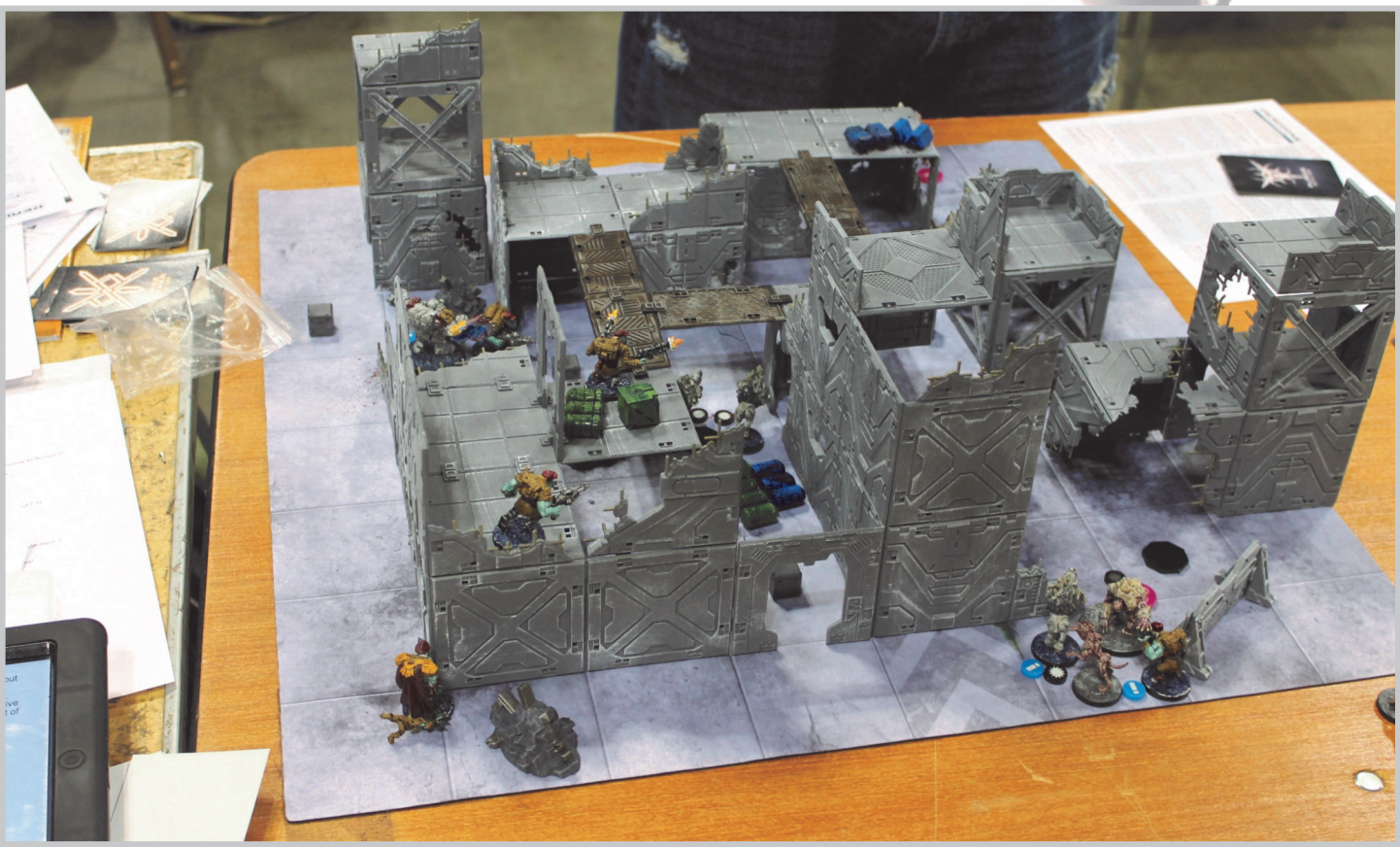
was not standard military issue. We are talking Black Operations, ladies and gentlemen, a shadow military. It may be the Corporation going against Council wishes, or it may be rogue assets. We do not know.

'Some of you may be thinking this deployment is a basic search-and-retrieval. Find the shuttle, neutralise the target, secure the Artefact. Not so simple. As I know some of you have already heard, allow me now to confirm: Gamma Prime's entire surveillance network has been wiped. Total blackout. We do not know where that shuttle went, nor do we have the time or resources to sweep the planet.

'However, every Corporation divisional headquarters carries backups of all footage. While we cannot retrieve backup surveillance remotely, we can access those backups manually. And that is exactly what we are going to do. So in short, our first objective is this: gain access to Corp HQ and secure the footage. Then we let the tech-boys do their magic and map the shuttle's flight path. Our second objective is then search and retrieval. I know you will all be *very* eager to show Annika just exactly how wrong she was to do what she did. Any questions?'

Celeste's delivery was performed with her usual swagger, an assurance of self-confidence that was unbreakable, but also refined, less abrasive than her typical tone.

It was clear that the Enforcers had many questions, but there was a moment of silence before any voices were raised as Celeste swept her gaze across the room.



Deadzone game in progress at Adepticon 2015, image courtesy of Mantic Games.

By Matthew Adlard

A male voice from the back spoke up, the vocal-amplifier not entirely negating what could only be a co-prosperity world accent.

'How many infected are we facing?'

'Three hundred and fifty minimum. Likely more.'

'Any estimates of how many of each stage?'

'Standard approximation of contagion spread estimates one Stage Two for every three Stage Three's. Working these figures backwards, we estimate at least four Stage One's.'

Rylor thought he heard the Enforcer who had asked the question almost begin a third, but Celeste had a way of answering that dissuaded making her repeat herself. She turned as another voice spoke up, a female one.

'Any idea why Annika did it?

'Ask what you really mean, Roza.'

'Fine, I'll ask what clearly everyone is thinking. Did Annika go insane? And are any of us going to as well? We've all heard stories of what these Artefacts can do.'

'We've all heard stories about what you're willing to do on leave as well Roza. Doesn't make them true, does it?' A few Enforcers laughed, Roza herself one of them. 'But no. You all saw the footage. Were those the actions of an Enforcer who had lost her mind? No. What she did was calmly and coolly executed, with no signs of distress. She knew exactly what she was doing. While there are unconfirmed reports of repeat exposure to these Artefacts possibly causing insanity – that is all they are, unconfirmed.'

'Thank you Interrogator.'

'What's the plan to access Corp HQ?' the Enforcer next to Rylor said, folding his arms.

'You read my mind, Enforcer Kallon. Right, moving onto part two,' and Celeste gestured behind her, the vid-screen manifesting a

three-dimensional map of Gamma Prime with three trails through it. She pointed as she spoke. 'We will be approaching from the east, here, with the sun at our backs. Three seven-man squads led by Captain Augustus and sergeants Carthor and Voya will work their way through Gamma Prime. A low atmosphere shuttle will be our eye in the sky informing us of Plague movements. We're going to navigate each street as it comes, and work our way quietly through that city.'

She paused as some regions of the map glowed a faint crimson, distant from the marked trails.

'Most fighting is centred on remaining civilian resistance, which we will either avoid or bypass as quickly as possible. The routes you see on the screen are the three quickest, that is, if nothing gets in our way. Each of the three teams will take one route and we will converge at Corp HQ. Once at Corp HQ the first to arrive will scout the area while the second and third secure a fifty metre perimeter. First squad will enter HQ, secure the backups, and transmit the data. From there, if we can reach the shuttle landing by foot, we will. If not, we return to the landing zone and await further orders.'

'Interrogator, you said we can't access the backups remotely. Why can't we? Surely the Council is able to override?' said Kallon.

'The Council can do a lot of things, but they can't do the impossible. Remote access would be a huge security risk. Potentially, it only takes one bribe, one defector, or one mistake to leave a system wide open. Remote access is unavailable: the servers are purposely offline. Access requires entry to Corporation Headquarters, bypassing several layers of security, and only then are the backups made available. So, even we Enforcers must do it manually. Next question?'

'Well if that's the case how come we can remote access the initial footage in the first place?'

'Because those servers are online, because they need to be – we can tell you're not a technician. I'll spell it out for you: online servers have round-the-clock protection. Backup servers are offline. The whole point of having different systems of security is so that if one is breached, the other cannot be. Do you understand now? Do you feel smart? Or would you like me to explain how your weapon works also?'

Deadzone Plague Stage 1 by Nicodemus Sandberg

‘We’re moving by foot through an infested city?’ Kallon seemed sceptical. Furthermore, he seemed nonplussed by Celeste’s tone and the smattering of laughter that follower her insults; Rylor sensed a familiarity between them.

‘Absolutely.’

‘If we go loud we’ll draw every damn infected to us.’

‘We are going to avoid engagement at all costs, hence the fly-over shuttle. If any squad is threatened with exposure they are to fall back and find an alternate route. If this is not an option they are find cover and wait. The other squads will continue onwards if possible.’

Deadzone Reb Drone and Natasha Mercenary by Paul Mullis

‘Orders regarding civilians?’

‘You won’t see any.’

‘And if we do?’

‘Standard orders: Population irrelevant. Evidence of Plague life forms our only concern. Civilians to be avoided if possible, use of lethal force authorised if necessary.’

‘Why don’t we just fly in, land on the roof of Corp HQ, and take the damn footage that way?’

‘Kallon, saying shit like that is why you’ll never make the Intelligence Corps,’ said Celeste, quickly followed by another scattering of laughter. ‘And it’s hard to do a one-to-one Q and A session in a room this big. I’ll get to the point, don’t worry now.’

Celeste stepped to the edge of the stage and looked down at him. ‘You think we’d have missed it if it was that easy? Corp HQ’s are purposely designed with slanted roofs so nothing can land on them. Furthermore, it took an entire First Recon team to extract the Artefact across the city in the midst of a full-scale outbreak. You think a shuttle that could fly despite the Deadzone wouldn’t

attract every single Plague Stage One, Two and Three in the area? The Plague is desperate for a way off the planet. A shuttle landing will be a beacon for every infected within the entire city to come running.

Celeste stepped back. 'For those of you that have never seen a Plague victim, here's an image.' The image of a horrendously mutated humanoid appeared on the vid-screen, flesh and bone grown out of all proportion.

'That's a Stage Three. Easy to put down, but retains enough intelligence to use tools and weapons, and most worryingly, pilot spacecraft, which is how the Plague spreads off-world and the reason why we cannot land a shuttle where they can reach it. Stage Two's are the premier warriors, utterly lethal in melee,' another image appeared. This creature – for a creature is all it could be called – bore resemblance to the previous image, but was twice the size of a man with elongated limbs and vicious claws. 'And a Stage One? Well, Stage One's are those first infected by the Artefact. And they're the worst of the lot. A bestial intelligence and cunning makes them ideal leaders.' A third and final image appeared, a hulking monstrosity of bone and muscle and sinew.

The room had gone quiet. Celeste turned from the vid-screen back to the crowd.

'The Plague is the stuff of nightmares. Now, these creatures aren't dumb, unlike poor Kallon here. They exist to spread. Any plague that sees a shuttle will be drawn to it. They know it's a way off the planet. So we fly low, and land outside the city limits. We make our way in and out again, nice and quiet, and then either back to the LZ or onto the target if so possible.'

Rylor felt a shadow fall across him, and for no reason he could discern, sensed he was being watched. From the shadows of the platform, he saw Augustus looking directly at him as Celeste finished her words.

Celeste asked for any more questions. When none were forthcoming, Augustus stepped forward and dismissed them to the launch bay.

* * *

Deadzone Enforcers by Adam Morrow

Deadzone Enforcer Captain by Chris Schlumpberger

Rylor looked around him as the room emptied, and seeing Celeste last, fell into step alongside her.

'What do these people know about me?' He spoke low, and gestured to the Enforcers in front of them.

'What do they know about you?' she repeated. 'Nothing.'

'You're telling me twenty Enforcers just blindly accepted the presence of a First Recon appearing on board after a failed deployment, without putting two and two together?'

'They're not fools. They know you were a part of the operation. They know you survived. That's all they know, and all they need to. They don't know who you are, what your past is, or what Annika was to you. You may choose to tell them, if you so wish. I'll not stop you.'

'I presumed Augustus had told them, and that was the reason for the two weeks of silence. I was a pariah, the lover of a traitor.'

'On named terms without titles, are you, you and the Captain? And no, not so. *Captain,*' she emphasised the word 'Augustus informed all Enforcers you were not to be disturbed, under any circumstances. He wanted to see how you would perform, what you would do, denied any outlet of support beyond what you could muster from within. He wanted to see if what had happened would break you; whether the silence would break you'.

She stopped walking and faced him. 'Look at it from our perspective. You survived Gamma Tau, Rylor, but could you survive yourself? Could you really accept what happened, and move beyond it, with no help, no aid from anyone?' Celeste didn't wait for an answer as she walked away, speaking over her shoulder to reply. 'Because you know as well as I that is what it means to be an Enforcer. To do the things others cannot.'

Rylor caught up to her as she continued: 'If the time comes and you have to put a bullet into Annika, it will be only you and her. No one can help you in such moments. No aid is to be found. It is instinctual, your training honed into an art of war: you, her, the sights and the trigger. In those moments, we know what we are, and what we are not. We had to know what you were, but more importantly, what you could become again. And here you are. An Enforcer.'

'Your rhetoric is good, Celeste I'll give you that. Seems you can speak with decorum when needed, after all.'

'I'm not entirely a bitch.'

'You know those reports *are* confirmed, of the Artefacts causing insanity'.

'Of course I know that' she whispered, the nearest Enforcers only several steps in front. 'But I am an Interrogator, and you're First Recon. We need to know these things. But them?' Celeste nodded toward the rest of the Enforcers. 'They don't. They're the

Deadzone Enforcer Defenders by Loic Boudoya

frontline of the Council, an elite guard. They're soldiers; not officers, not scientists. They don't need to know what those things can do. Telling them would only cause fear. It would aid nothing.'

'Don't you think they deserve to know what they're facing?'

'They're Enforcers. What they're facing is a hostile galaxy, and everything that incorporates. They know their roles, their abilities, and most importantly, the risks. And they do not shy from them. You should have more faith.'

Deadzone Enforcers by Paul Mullis

'Faith is hard to come by once shattered,' he muttered through gritted teeth.

'Don't give me the high and mighty then the low and sorry, Rylor. Any Enforcer in my position, who knew what I knew, would tell you the same. We operate on a need to know basis. That's what we agree when we sign up. It is the Will of Council, who see the galaxy as a whole, and that's what they have decided is best. You think you know better than them? Besides, it is only repeat exposure that is confirmed to cause insanity.'

Rylor nodded in response. 'He's grooming you for Command,' he said after a moment.

'Who is?'

'Augustus.'

Celeste shrugged and continued looking straight ahead.

'I saw you in there. It's the way you gaze at people. You anticipate them. You see through them. If eyes could undress then we'd all have been naked.' Rylor turned forward; they were almost at the launch bay.

'It's a skill, I'll grant you that,' said Celeste.

Her voice was distant.

To be continued...▪

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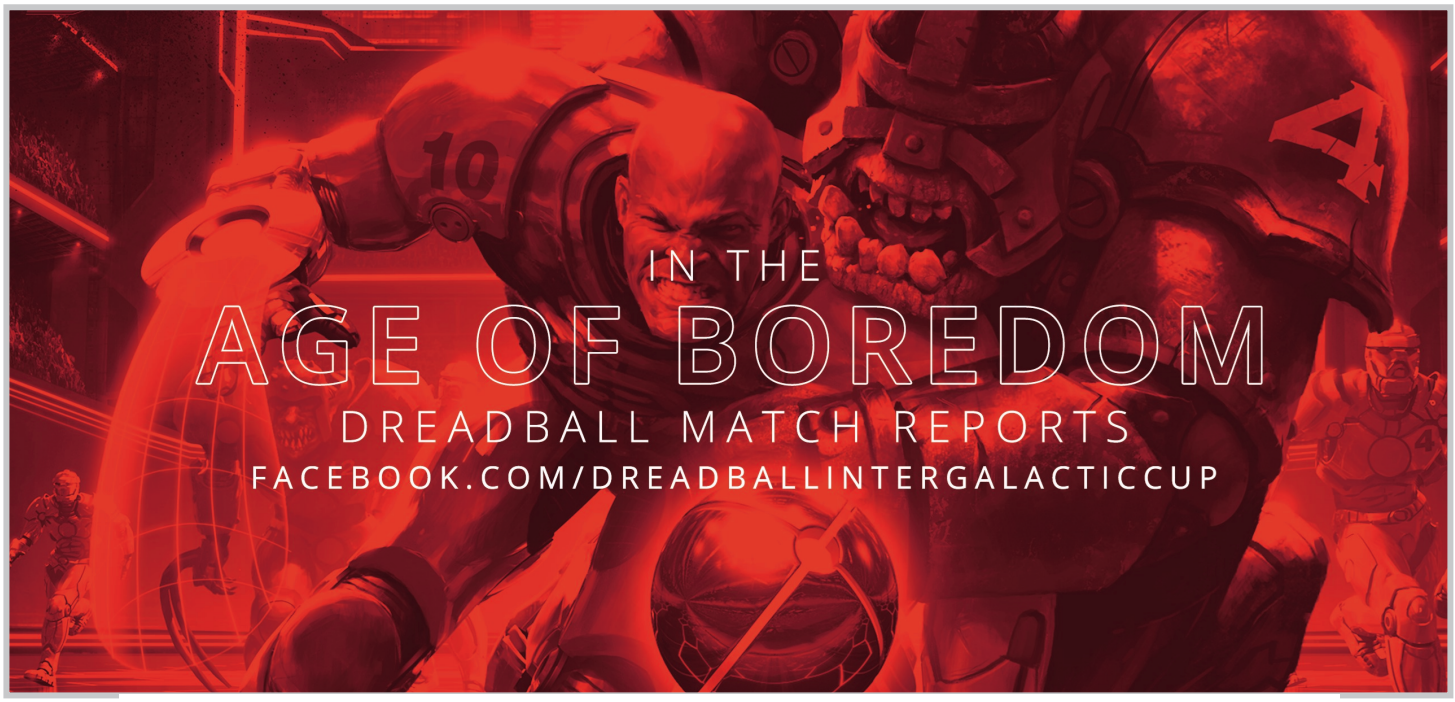

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Ogre Warriors by Taylor Holloway

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KINGS OF WAR: APOCALYPSE

In Queensland, Australia, a group of Kings of War players detail a batrep for the largest KoW game ever played, of over one hundred thousand points...

DEADZONE: THE CLEANSING, PART 5

The briefing begins, and the details of the mission are laid bare: Enter into an infested city, press past the hordes of Plague, and secure the data about the stolen Artefact...

AND MUCH MORE!